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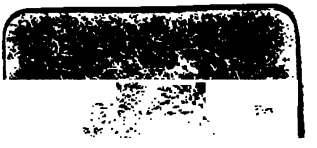
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THE HISTORY OF A PIN


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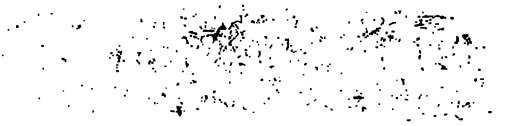

THE HISTORY OF A PIN.





NELLY TEACHING JOE TO WRITE.

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THE

HISTORY OF A PIN.

By E. M. S.



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THE HISTORY OF A PIN.

CHAPTER I.

GRANDMAMMA'S WARDROBE, AND HOW THE PIN CAME TO TELL ITS HISTORY.

I SUPPOSE that most people have had grandmammas; and, as far as my personal knowledge goes, I am equally certain that all grandmammas have some wonderful receptacle of valuables, kept secure from meddlesome little fingers and prying little eyes.

The character of this place of treasure varies with grandmamma's peculiar tastes and habits: sometimes it is the store-room; sometimes it is the "big box," the lid of which does duty as an ottoman, and is much too heavy for any one, except grown-up people, to lift.

ago than I should like to mention, we—that is to say, grandmamma, my own mamma, my sister Ellen, and myself—were all in grandmamma's room; and after Ellen and I had been made happy and busy for the rest of the day, with bits of silk, old feathers, flowers, and ribbons, once lovely in their day—now, alas! sadly spotted with mildew, but with a little management they looked splendid still on dolls' dresses. We—Ellen and myself, I mean—were consulting over our treasures near the window, grandmamma and mamma were putting away other things, when we were all startled by a sort of squeaking noise, which frightened us all dreadfully, but, on investigation, turned out nothing at all alarming, being only the voice of an old yellow motherly-looking pin, with a big head; indeed, altogether of large dimensions. It had pinned up a bundle of old lace, which grandmamma had taken down and put up again. Apparently this had aroused our pin, for, stretching her solitary limb, *it*—I beg her pardon, *she;* pins are always ladies—began to talk, and asked if we should like to know her *history.* Grandmamma said, "Yes;"—we

had not so far recovered as to speak; and as we had often heard people say they would like to know the history of one individual pin, mamma said she would write down what Mrs. Pin was kind enough to inform us.

Thus encouraged to be confidential, Mrs. Pin, after a proper degree of modest hesitation, proceeded to fulfil her promise of telling us her history as follows; and as it is her own history, we shall leave her to tell it in her own way, and in the first person singular, indicative mood, past tense, as every decently grammatical individual, whether pin or person, ought to do.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. PIN'S FIRST IMPRESSIONS IN THE BEGINNING OF LIFE.



RECOLLECT nothing of the first few stages of my existence. I have heard it said, on good authority, that I must have lived for ages, deep down in the bowels of the earth, long before any of the present company knew the value of myself and family. Also, that after being brought from the mine at great expense and trouble, I underwent a variety of horrible processes, of burning, cutting, &c.; though of these, as I said before, I have fortunately no recollection. My tortures, however, must have been excruciating, and this part of my history is too painful to be dwelt upon.

So please consider my torments at an end, and myself converted into a perfect new pin,

beautifully proportioned, and a little above the middle size—I always despised small people—and so clean and orderly in my appearance as to give rise to an excellent proverb, with which you are all no doubt well acquainted. After being fully grown and well polished, I was sent out to seek my fortune in the world; for which purpose I was put into a most uncomfortable little box, with about two hundred others—at least as nearly as we could calculate, for we were so shamefully squeezed, that, lay our heads together as we might, we could not collect our few ideas.

And what was of more consequence to me, I had the misfortune to receive a most undeserved and undesired number of scratches. I repeat, this was of more consequence to me, as the experience of all the others must have been precisely similar to my own, and they were all pins of a very taciturn and uninteresting temperament.

How long this depressing state of things continued I cannot say; it seemed endless; the only change being that now and then our box received a violent shake, and was turned upside down.

I shall tell you presently how and where my release from prison took place, but must now rest a while, as, having been for some time unused to conversation, I begin to feel extremely fatigued!

I will, however, premise—as Mrs. —— is kind enough to write down my poor words—that as many of the persons mentioned in the following history are still alive, of course it would not be pleasant for them to recognize their own names, and I shall therefore take the liberty of giving them false ones.

CHAPTER III.

THE DELIGHTS OF COMING OUT, AND WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARDS.

MY escape from prison was effected in a small-ware shop, in what I afterwards learned was Kirktoun, the county town of Lintshire; and the humane person who released me was a tall, hard-favoured woman, about the middle age, whose name I sóon discovered to be Mrs. Margery Poke, and no less a personage than own maid to Lady Dripley, for whom she had come into Kirktoun that day to make purchases, in preparation for a great dinner party to be given by her ladyship in honour of her brother, who had lately returned home after a long absence.

These particulars I gathered from the conversation of Mrs. Poke and the old lady who kept the shop, when she opened the box to

show that we, the inmates, were (as a body) pins of first-rate condition. And the pin which had fastened one end of it dropping out, I was selected on account of my fine proportions to supply its place.

I was then, box and all, wrapped in paper, with eight reels of cotton, five pieces of tape, four papers of needles, and a few very impertinent corking pins, and our parcel consigned to Mrs. Poke's capacious basket, in which was an immense variety of other matter of an inferior kind, such as dried fruit and sugar plums, muslin and ribbons, tea and sugar, flannel, tapioca, &c. And in this undignified receptacle we were carried to some distance. There our particular parcel was taken out, and to my great mortification not unwrapped, but laid aside with the casual notice, "Small things from Smith's." *Small,* indeed! And pins there!

I am afraid Mrs. Poke was narrow-minded, but the loss was her own!

We were suffered to lie in quiet for some time; indeed, I had nearly got over my disappointment, when we were hurriedly undone with the exclamation,—

"Oh, here they are at last! One *never does* find a decent pin when one wants it!"

This was no doubt *not* a pretty speech, but the speaker, nevertheless, was a very pretty young lady, to whose toilette my old friend Mrs. Poke was putting the last finishing touches; and the cause of whose agony was that just at once she could not find a pin to fasten her sash. She went on,—

"Poke, do take that pin! Not that one; that other big one. That'll do. Oh, it won't go in; it hasn't got a bit of a point!"

"Now, miss," rejoined Poke, with the most provoking gravity and slowness, "it's a capital pin; only you're just so *un*patient; always was so; heavy handful the man'll have that gets ye!"

While she was thus speaking, I successfully fastened the sash, and off went my young mistress with the words: "Oh, what fun! Don't I look nice? But we'll be late, all of us!" Then coming back,—

"Poke, that's just a hideous cap of yours; but you never take *my* advice!"

"Never mind, dearie," meekly replied the unfortunate Poke. So down stairs we went

to the well-lighted, handsome old drawing-room, and, in spite of our fears, we were not late, and my mistress had further time to look at the room, her mother, uncle, and self; and I had time to realize the full dignity of my position. It was an interesting one, for I had the power of knowing what passed in the bosom of my wearer. This knowledge was pleasant in the present instance, for a merrier, kinder, and more innocent creature than Miss Milly did not exist.

Well, the company came, and she seemed glad to see every one, but I felt she was expecting some one else; for, even when she was speaking to the stately old ladies and gentlemen, and the smart young ones, she always watched the door! At last some one came, and she felt so very glad. Not that she said anything particular, but she felt so very happy to have him come and stand by her; and so glad that he (this time) "looked nice."

I could not tell you, nor would it be proper, all she felt that night, for no one but myself saw it; but a good long time after the company had gone away, she first laughed, then cried, and said,—

"Mamma, Henry asked me to marry him, and I said, Yes!—He is coming to see you to-morrow."

I was prepared for a most interesting scene, but, alas for the hopes of earth! none such took place. I fell to the ground, and for a few seconds heard no more. When I recovered consciousness, I heard only a few words of congratulation and approval from Lady Dripley; and after a hearty kiss and good-night to her uncle, Milly followed her mother out of the room. After they left, I amused myself by watching the evolutions of Mr. Trimitt. He first poked the fire, and sat down before it; then got up and began a progress round the room, putting everything in its wrong place, evidently under the sober conviction that he was "setting to rights;" then, with something between a growl and a smile, resumed his position before the fire, and took up the *Times*. That also proving unsatisfactory, I could hear him say in broken sentences, "Can't read to-night, somehow; great bore; very odd Milly should think of marrying, especially on £300 a year. It counts for even less in England than in Scot-

land. Henry, if he'd been a sensible fellow, would have hanged himself before proposing. Fools people are. She's a perfect baby. I remember when she was born; don't know what she undertakes, &c. Suppose I'll have to make them a wedding-present, and stand sponsor to all the babies: people ought to be more considerate." Then, as if something had just struck him, he started up very unlike a sensible and considerate person, with—

"Good gracious! there's all the wax-lights burning; what will my sister say? After my promising to put 'em every one out, if she would only go to bed."

On which consideration he set to work, and put every light out, and left me in peace to my own meditations.

I did enjoy the soft carpet whereon I lay; I also liked to look at the firelight dancing on the polished furniture and picture-frames. But there was an undefinable feeling of sadness stealing over me. Where was the merry party who so lately had been there? All quiet. The bright lights all extinguished; the room silent as death. Do all things end thus? This I strove in vain to understand.

and could not, till the fire seemed to read my thoughts, and said to me,—

"Poor pin, you are puzzled! This is the end of your first day in the outer world; it is the end of mine too; but there is this difference between us, I have no more days to come, you have many. You have begun your experience, I have ended mine, and it is this:—Everything in this world ends thus. It is so with the children of men; it is so with fires also. In the morning I was called into life, nursed with great care, fed before I knew I required it; and once, when I threatened to become sickly and feeble, was tended with assiduity. The useful part of my life was bright, joyous, and happy; now my work is done, and consequently I die."

I replied, "No wonder, dear fire, you are melancholy; but tell me what you meant by saying that it is thus also with the children of men? Will Milly and Henry, and all I have seen, die thus? It is sad to think of!"

"It is even so," replied my friend: "when Milly and Henry have done their work, they too shall pass away, and their works crumble to nought, like the ashes of myself under the

grate. I can tell you no more. My time is past; find out what you can."

And the last spark of life fled, and left me trying to make out in the dark the cold gray ashes. I suppose my sad meditations made me sleepy, for I remembered no more. Next morning I was picked up and stuck in the housemaid's gown, where I was carried about all day—in the course of which I heard Mrs. Poke announce at dinner that "Miss Milly is going to be married to Mr. Henry, bless her! he's a lucky man:" rather contradictory of Poke, considering the advice to Milly the previous night. And the audience, headed by Cook, drank a good mug of beer to her health, and rejoined, "Bless her!"

CHAPTER IV.

SINKS INTO LOWER SOCIETY, AND GOES TO A FAIR.

THE morning after my conversation with the dying fire, you will recollect that I was picked up by Nelly, and that I passed that day in her possession—not that day only, for I remained with her for many succeeding weeks. And a very happy life we both had. It was a further advantage to me, as I was thereby enabled to remain among my first friends. You are already acquainted with some members of the household. The family, when I came first to the house, consisted, as you are aware, of Lady Dripley, Milly, and occasionally her uncle; but besides these there soon appeared her ladyship's sister, Miss Trimitt, who had been away on a visit at the time of my arrival. Then there was Mrs. Poke, the lady's-maid, whom you no doubt remember; then

Cook, a large, stout woman, with a face the colour of her kitchen-fire—a kindly body, fond of being comfortable herself and seeing other people so—for which end she considered no trouble too great; next my friend Nelly, the housemaid, who also waited at table—as tidy, pleasant, and good a servant as you could find; but every one has trials, and Nelly's was, that Miss Trimitt, Poke, and Cook all considered it to be their duty to tell her what hers was, which they did with praiseworthy punctuality and minuteness. But by the time I knew her, Nelly had got used to it, and was not in the least dismayed at the high estimate they were so kind as to form of what she ought to be, nor low-spirited at her own shortcomings.

I have no doubt all the good advice she received was not lost; to be sure, if she could have remembered and digested it all, she would have been a perfect wonder; as it was, even Miss Trimitt became quite fond of her, and when in her presence any one spoke of Nelly, used always to say, "Yes, Nelly is fair, very fair; that is, considering her easy temper."

The only other person to be mentioned in the household was Joe, whose business was to work in the garden under the eye of Miss Trimitt, mind the pony, and drive the little carriage wherein his lady was accustomed to take her daily airing. Now, here was to me, and I believe other people, a great mystery: I mean how the nervous Lady Dripley ever came to submit to be driven out in that carriage with that boy of all others as charioteer. However, it formed one of Joe's duties: his others were to clean knives and shoes, and, in Cook's brief but comprehensive expression, "Do as he was bid." Biddings from her he got plenty; whether he followed them was never discovered by me or any one else.

Such was the family in which some of the happiest days of my life have been spent. Very happy in a quiet way we all were, and the days went swiftly by, one after another, all exactly alike, till I quite lost all account of how long I had been there.

What a regular life we led! You could have told the hour by the diverse and sundry occupations of the household, almost as well

which was a great delight to me, as it afforded an opportunity of noticing the daily life and character of the inmates, wholly unknown to themselves.

The room itself was of a tolerable size, though certainly not large. The door opened from the tiny passage in one corner; and there were two windows, the larger to the front, facing the south, the smaller one in the gable at one side of the fire. Directly opposite to me was the big bed, with its clean patchwork quilt; and at the foot of it was another door, opening into a press where were stowed away Auntie's common crockery and cooking utensils. Willie's bed stood next to the wall, on the other side of the small window, where hung his bird-cage and tool-box. In the opposite corner was the oaken aumry, polished to the highest degree, and containing within its funny little glazed doors all the grand china of which the house could boast. I think this piece of furniture was the pride of Auntie's heart, even as the eight-day clock was of the gudeman's. There was, of course, a table and a few chairs, and the "big kist" where lay the Sabbath clothes. I think I

have told you all that was in the room, except the geraniums in the window, and the "handy" things hung upon nails over the mantelpiece, of which my cushion was one; the rest were a looking-glass, irons, scissors, pincers, &c.

And that was exactly how the room appeared to me, as I looked down upon it the night after the fair, when honest James Caw and his wife were sound asleep, and poor Willie lying patiently awake, looking at the bright moonlight shining in at the window and down upon his little bed. I fancied once or twice that he smiled placidly, and murmured some simple words to himself, but so low that I could not hear what they were, though the smile recalled very forcibly to my mind a verse of a hymn of which Milly had been fond—

"Oh, blessed are the eyes that see,
Though silent anguish show,
The love that in their hours of sleep
Unthanked may come and go.
And blessed are the ears that hear,
Though kept awake by woe."

Next morning the household was early afoot, much earlier than I had been at all accustomed to at Lady Dripley's, for by six o'clock

James Caw and his brother the shepherd had to be at their work on the farm a good bit off. Now began the business of the day: the little ones had to be washed and dressed, and then Tom and Mysie helped Auntie to clean up both their own room and hers, which took all the time till eight, when Tom was despatched for the milk, and Auntie made the porridge. By the time the milk arrived the men came home hungry, and breakfast engaged the general attention. After that, they went off again to work, and the children were again rubbed up, and sent to school under the guardianship of Tom, who, to do him justice, often quite surprised me by his carefulness and sense, after what I had seen of boys' nature as manifested in Joe. But then Joe was not used to being looked up to and trusted in, which perhaps accounted for the difference.

When the house was quiet, Auntie dressed Willie, and having settled him in his window with his work and his bird, left him to pursue his own avocations while she went about hers. Auntie's avocations were certainly of the most numerous and various description. All the cleaning, washing, cooking, mending, and

contriving to be done for two men and four children, by one pair of hands, certainly left no room for idleness; and if, in addition, Auntie had not possessed a thrifty, managing head, and a kindly, willing heart, she never could have undertaken or got through the amount of work she did. Quite contented all the time, not thinking she did anything very meritorious, or that she was much to be praised and pitied in the doing of it, but considering herself well off in being able, and having the means to do it.

And yet you children, who live in nice houses, with a full dinner every day, would be quite surprised, and perhaps smile at what Auntie counted riches, often making a dinner of what my old friend Cook would have consigned, without a moment's hesitation, to the pig's tub. Certainly Auntie had one thing in her favour; if she had more to work for, she had more space to do it in than falls to the lot of every working woman, for had she not two rooms? and as the shepherd was often away for whole days at a time with his sheep, she had his room to work in pretty much as she liked; and she *did* like to have things

nice and comfortable for him as well as for her own husband.

It happened that this was washing-day, but it was luckily fine, and so although the house was in confusion for a while, it did not long remain so, as the clothes could be dried on the lines outside—a great relief to Auntie's mind, as there was nothing her husband disliked so much, or had so little patience with, as a lot of wet clothes flapping about on ropes across the room when he came home.

So, as Auntie is busy with her washing, let us go and see what Willie is about. His smile has gone, and it is with a face of grave anxiety that he is shaping and carving the legs of a wooden jack-jumper, the body and arms of which lie before him. Now you are not to suppose that Willie looks grave because he does not understand his work, or finds it more difficult than he expected. Not at all. But this is a jumper on an entirely new principle, so, of course, Willie is anxious till he see how it will turn out as a dancer.

He has long known the use of his fingers, and works at toy-making every day when he is able; the fruit of his labours, in the shape

of jack-jumpers, puzzles, boats, and tiny furniture, being disposed of at the curiosity-shop of Kirktoun. And a tolerably good profit they realize; at least so the maker thinks, considering the materials—only a knife with two blades, a bit of sand-paper, some pieces of soft and hard wood, a few tiny tacks, a little glue and common paint, and, be it remembered, a good deal of patience and ingenuity. To be sure, he cut his fingers at first, but the cuts soon healed; and Auntie wisely thought "any honest work is better than idle-set," besides diverting his attention from that weary pain, sometimes better, sometimes worse, but never ending, and yet which it was his lot to bear indeed he became so used to it as scarcely to understand anything else!

Well, the morning slipped away, and dinner time came, with the children rushing in ravenous from school; only, Father and Uncle not appearing, Auntie judged it best to send their dinners in a basket by Tom. And then again the house was quiet. The washing ended, and everything put in its place, Auntie was ready to come and admire the new jumper, now complete in red-paint coat

and yellow cap; and after inquiring into his merits, and pronouncing him and his inventor "a wonder o' cleverness," she sat down to the consideration of the best way of making two new frocks for Mysie out of an old gown of her own—a new one having been bought yesterday; which took up her whole attention till the said Mysie came in with her brothers from school, when she was made to tuck up her frock, and help Auntie to gather the clothes from the line, damp and fold them, and lay them all straight on the top of the big kist, which served as a dresser, and a very convenient one too for Mysie's height. At six, the men came home to tea, or rather supper. And after "cracks" at the fireside over the paper (generally very old), and family worship, they all went to bed; and on the morrow began the daily work again.

Now, you are not to suppose, from anything I have said, that these good people were all and each of them patterns of perfection; that Auntie was never "overtaken" by her work, never "put out;" Willie never heard to speak a hasty word; the little ones never troublesome; and the men always amiable,

considerate, and gentlemanly, even when wet, tired, and hungry! Cottagers are just like other people, strange to say! And therefore it was no more wonderful that these things should happen in this house than in any other —my only wonder being that they did not happen twenty times a day oftener than they did.

But this I must say, that these feelings and ways were not cherished! They were striven against, and kept down by a great power, which was to me for a long time a mystery. I daresay you have nearly forgotten my conversation with the dying fire the first night of my life in the outer world; but the remembrance of it had often troubled me, and it was only about this time that I began to get any real light on the subject of it, namely, Is what we see really the end of people and their actions? Does everything end with this present life? If so, what a weary life for many like my poor friends in the cottage; labour with no reward, and hard times with nothing to look forward to! While thinking *this* the truth, what had often surprised me more than anything was how Willie, with a

boy's nature in him, could go on in his corner, just doing his work from day to day, and be content, if, as the fire said, when his work was done he and it were to crumble away.

I was sorely perplexed; yet, often as I thought of it, I could make out no more. And so I went on till one Sabbath morning, when the rest were gone to church, Willie was sitting alone in the sun, with old Rover at his feet. He had a large book on his knee, and was using me as a pointer, when he came to the words: "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

I looked at the reader. His whole face was bright as he read on, the description of the Happy Land, and then laying his hands together, exclaimed—

"O Lord, how long? I'm whiles sair wearying; but keep me frae wearying till my work be dune! Then take me hame to thee!"

Now I saw, as I had never done before, what it was that gave such patience of hope and happy looking forward to the lame boy, and not only so, but contentment with his lot

in this present life—looking not so much to "the things seen and temporal, as to the things not seen and eternal."

Happy boy, with such a bright home before him, and a dear Friend there, who once lived on the earth a painful life, and died a dreadful death, that he might be able in that bright and happy land to prepare a glorious mansion for his weary lamb, so that, when he should be ready for it, and it for him, he might be a welcome inhabitant of his Father's house for ever!

Happy Willie! no longer did I wonder that he should be content. How should I?

Nor was I surprised when, a few days after, he said to Auntie, "I've been thinking it'll no be lang noo, afore I be called to my lang hame."

"Eh, my bairn, what gars ye think that?" said Auntie; "ha'e ye pain? or are ye dowie? or what will it be that ails ye?"

"Naething ails me, but I feel it; and in the night-time I think I hear the angels calling me."

Poor Auntie threw her apron over her head, and wept quietly as he went on.

"Dinna greet, and vex me; it'll maybe be a good while yet; dinna tak' on. I'll come and see ye, gin I can, though ye see na me; I winna forget ye."

"Oh, my bairn, my bairn, we'll miss ye sair: ye've haen a weary time, but the white speerits round about the throne are them that cam' out o' great tribulation, and ye'll be far happier nor we could keep ye."

Just then a succession of small knocks came to the door, and Auntie jumped up, wiped her eyes, settled her cap, and went to open it. We must leave it to another chapter to tell who the visitor was.

CHAPTER VI.

AUNTIE'S CHARITIES, WHEREBY MRS. PIN MAKES THE ACQUAINTANCE OF BAT.

WHEN she opened the door, there at first seemed no cause for the noise; but on her inquiries—"Wha's there? and what are ye wantin'?" there appeared a small child, who delivered, with great fluency and no stops, the following oration :—

"My mither sent me to ye, Mrs. Caw, and if ye please to come, she'll be muckle obleeged to ye; she's no skeely hersel'; folk say ye are."

Having come to the end of her message, she was running away, when Auntie stopped her, and succeeded in finding out her name and abode, and proceeded to inquire what her mother wanted her to do.

"I dinna ken," was the answer.

"Which o' ye's ill?"

"The baby's took bad."

"What's the matter with it?"

"I dinna ken."

"Dinna stan' there tellin' me ye dinna ken; ye ken fine, so tell me this minute."

Thus adjured, the small ambassadress began to cry, and whimpered,—

"He's chokin', and mammy's feared he's gotten the hoast."

Auntie had all this time been leisurely putting on her bonnet and shawl (taking me), but now fairly startled, exclaimed, "Bairn, rin for your life, and tell mother to put the big kettle fu' o' hot water into a tub, and put him in it, if I dinna get there first." So the bairn set off, and Auntie, who was a great doctress, hastily made a mustard blister, covered it with an old piece of linen, and started for the cottage to which she had been directed, like a giantess in seven-league boots.

When we arrived there, we found everything in dire confusion, and the messenger just telling about the hot water to her mother, a sickly, helpless-looking woman, with a child of eighteen months' old in her lap, evidently

far gone in croup. Auntie saw in a minute she had no time to lose, so poking up the dull fire she soon made a bright blaze, filled up the kettle, made the little girl fetch a bucket, and blow the fire, so that by the time she had undressed the struggling baby, there was a fine hot bath to put him into. And what with that and the mustard blister, he soon began to breathe more freely. And all that remained to be done was to amuse and divert his attention from the smarting mustard: however, Auntie stayed to give him his medicine, and wrap him up in his little bed—his poor mother all the while looking helplessly on, no more able to do anything for him than if she had never seen a baby before; though, poor creature, she was most grateful and profuse in her thanks, and even wanted to give Auntie something for her trouble, which was of course refused. "Hout, woman! keep the siller; you'd do as muckle for me ony day, if I needed it; ye ken puir folk maun aye help ane another:" and with a kindly "Good-day, neighbour; I think he'll do fine now, but if he doesna ye can aye let me ken," Auntie returned home, her heart all the lighter for her

deed of charity. When we got home I was put again in my cushion, and as I heard no more of baby, I hope and believe his recovery was perfect.

Things went on much as usual, and you might have thought that Willie's words were forgotten by both, so little was said; not so, however, for to him it was the pleasantest subject of meditation. Into Auntie's heart they sank deep, and she pondered them there; perhaps that was the reason she said so little. I fancied her manner more quiet, and her words, if fewer, more gentle; her great thought seemed to be how to do enough for Willie.

One day, a cold, wet, wretched day—such as we sometimes have towards the end of summer, and which seem like a taste of the coming winter—in the afternoon, for I remember the house was "redd up," Auntie had had a baking of oat-cakes, too, which were cooling in tempting piles on the dresser. Oh, they *did* smell so good!

Well, she had just sat down to knit when some one knocked at the door, and then it opened, before Auntie had time to reach it, and a small sharp face, with a pair of keen

dark eyes, half buried by a quantity of tangled black hair, thrust itself into the room.

"What are ye wantin'?" demanded the astonished inmates in a breath. As an answer to this question, the owner of the head, a girl about eight or nine years old, walked into the room, and dropping an apologetic curtsy, began to beg in the whining tone peculiar to her class, stringing together a long rigmarole of sentences, which had apparently not much connection with each other, the substance of course being that she wanted a penny or ha'penny, or bread, or, in short, anything she could get. And, certainly, poor thing! she did look sufficiently wretched standing there, her half-starved figure barely covered with her ragged clothes, and all so cold, wet, and dirty.

Whether it was this fact, or the bad day, or the smell of the new cakes, or Auntie's softened state of mind, or all these put together, I cannot say, but she immediately rose and gave the child a cake, and then put her out of the door. She had scarcely closed it when she was startled by a sharp cry of pain, and going quickly out to see what was the

matter, found the beggar-child trying to rise from the ground, crying bitterly. Auntie's kindly heart was fairly roused now, so she picked up the child, and carried her across the room, to save her clean floor, and set her down on a chair before the fire.

The injury was found not to be serious. She had, it seemed, stumbled on a sharp stone and cut her feet, which had been tender before: but the poor little feet were all swelled, and so dirty that nothing could be done before a good washing; then Auntie put some cooling ointment on a piece of rag, and bandaged it nicely, putting me in to keep all straight. While this was being done, the little beggar was enjoying the fire and the nice cake.

In answer to Auntie's questions, she told her that her name was Bat; that her mother was dead; that she did not know who her father was; that she belonged to a gang of tinkers, then in the neighbourhood; and that the only people who she supposed knew or cared anything about her were Granny Grip and Shooter Ben; also that they just went about the country "doing as they could."

"Ye dinna speak like the bairns hereabout," quoth Auntie; "ye'll no be Scots, I'm thinkin'?"

"I don'no; I hear'n Granny say I were born some place i' the south country."

"Do ye bide ony gate mair reg'lar than ither?"

"We tramp Scotland most, 'special when the gentry's north; but I've been in England, and once was in Ireland:—just where we can pick up ought."

"And what do you do?"

"I beg; and they say that I'm real clever: but I must be steppin'; I've this village to beg before dark: good day. Thank ye, ma'am; I'll never forget your kindness." And so saying we left the cottage in company, Bat and I, to enter on what was to one of us an entirely new scene.

My companion begged from door to door all through the village, and very quickly she performed her work. She was evidently a practised hand, and it was wonderful how many pennies and scraps found their way into her dirty little wallet. Towards the end of her journey we were joined by a woman and

another girl, much older than Bat, to whom she related as much of her tale as she judged prudent, and by whom we were conducted to the rendezvous of the party, where they proposed to encamp for the night, where we arrived after dusk.

It was an old ruined cottage in a wood, just on the borders of a gentleman's park; in fact so close to the house that I wondered at the audacity of my entertainers in ever choosing such a place.

The only persons there, when we arrived, were an old woman busily engaged in lighting a fire, and two or three children gathering sticks for the same.

Bat, and the others as they came in, presented the old woman with the gains of the day. She was evidently a person of consideration, and addressed by all as Granny, from which I concluded that she was that Mrs. Grip mentioned aforetime by Bat.

As time went on, our party was increased by the appearance of three men; one older than the others—a tall, strong-made, swarthy fellow. He might be about forty years old. He was called Shooter Ben, from being the

cleverest and most daring poacher known, and one whom no gamekeeper would meet alone at night, if he could help it. The other two were mere lads, ignorant, rough, and brutal, but not so hardened or deliberate as Ben. By this time Mrs. Grip had succeeded in making a famous fire, and was now reposing in the light which she had kindled, solacing herself, at the same time, with the fumes of a short black pipe. She had fixed a tripod of sticks over the fire, and hung the pot after the most approved gipsy fashion. She might have been a picturesque figure at a distance, but the nearer you approached the more unprepossessing her aspect became. Her outer man (or rather woman) was enveloped from head to foot in what *had* been a green tartan cloak, apparently as venerable as herself, with two or three capes, and holes to let her arms through; a black beaver bonnet of the same age; and a red handkerchief tied loosely round her skinny throat. A basket, with a hole in the side, lay close to her, and in it were the tapes, glass beads, ballads, &c., which she made a pretence of selling at back-doors; her real object being (I fear) to convey to this

receptacle anything that struck her fancy or convenience. She seemed to be treated with great respect by all the rest; even by Ben, the acknowledged master of the party.

He had laid himself down on a heap of dead leaves and twigs, and with his unshaven visage and rough clothes, looked a good deal like a wild beast in his lair. He and Mrs. Grip preserved a dignified silence, while the lads and women talked in low tones at the other side of the fire. Bat was in a far-off corner, rehearsing to an admiring circle of the other children some of the most exciting of the day's adventures, showing off her bandaged foot; but, I noticed, carefully abstaining from all mention of the oat cake, or of having been inside the cottage; knowing that, if this had come to Mrs. Grip's ears, it would have been sure to give rise to an energetic remonstrance on the sinfulness of wasting so excellent an opportunity of adding to the general store, in the way of any little fancy article on which she might have been able to lay her hands—an opportunity which Bat, from some weak and unaccountable feelings of gratitude, had not duly improved.

So matters went on, till the conclave was broken up by Ben expressing his desire for supper, in terms more decided than polite; whereon Mrs. Grip slowly rose, and producing from some unknown corner a few battered tin bowls, uncovered the pot, and with a species of small pitch-fork fished up from its depths sundry pieces of meat, rabbit, &c., with a fair allowance of vegetables, got nobody knows where (unless, indeed, Mrs. Grip herself could have told); but wherever they came from, they were now in the form of a most excellent stew—very likely made after the famous recipé of Meg Merrilees, on the occasion of her entertaining Dominie Sampson to supper. This is the more probable, as I have been told Mrs. Grip (or, more familiarly, Granny) was descended from Meg on the mother's side. Anyhow, her stew was excellent, and fully appreciated, by no one more than by Bat, who, as she had done a good day's work, and her friend happened to be in tolerably good humour, came in for her full share.

After eating, there seemed to be no thought of washing up; but all settled themselves, as best they might, for the night. Poor little

Bat crept under a bush which grew in one corner, and, tired out with the day's work, was soon sound asleep; and so seemed all the rest —at all events they were quiet. And the moon shone out just as it had done on Willie's bed the first night I spent in the cottage. But on what a different scene! No cozy room here: the four walls, or rather, three and a half, were in a very tumble-down condition, in fact, nothing but bare, loose dykes, not a vestige of a roof; for as the night had cleared up dry and mild after the rain, Ben had not thought it worth while to put up the tent. And yet Bat slept as soundly under her bush as Mysie had ever done beside Jamie in their nice comfortable bed. I sometimes wonder what the moon things of the different scenes on which she looks. Whatever her pale majesty thinks, it does not seem to disturb her, so I don't suppose we shall ever find out.

CHAPTER VII.

MRS. PIN FINDS HERSELF IN BAD COMPANY.

THE life which I now led was, as may be supposed, very different from anything I could have conceived before.

I had always been a very staid, respectable sort of individual heretofore, and, like many other excellent people, plumed myself not a little upon this fact. You can, therefore, imagine how far I sank in my own good opinion, and how grievously I suffered at finding myself the daily companion of rogues and vagabonds. Their friend I tried not to be, for hitherto I had always been in the service of estimable, upright, and honest persons, whom I could heartily respect. Now I felt this impossible, for there was nothing more characteristic of my new acquaintance than their utter contempt of respectability and

public opinion. Neither was there a dishonest action they would not perform, if they could only make pretty sure of dodging the county policeman, whom we always allowed a few miles' start of us when we travelled.

For these reasons, therefore, I strove not to be friendly with any one of the gang with whom my lot was cast; for although Bat's foot was well long ago, yet there was a large rent in her skirt, which I fastened to the body of her frock, and there I remained for months.

In regard to Bat, however, I found it more difficult than you would have expected to adhere strictly to these my excellent and highly commendable resolutions. No doubt she was a very wicked, ugly, dirty, and as a lady (of whom she one day begged upon the road) remarked to her companion, "a singularly uninteresting child." Probably she was. Indeed she must have been, for no one, except in the way of cultivating her talents in the art of pilfering, seemed to take the slightest interest in her.

I believe it was this friendlessness of the neglected child that awakened my sympathy; and after all, poor thing, was it to be won-

dered at that she should be what she was? Beaten at night if she did not bring in a sufficient store of pence and scraps to satisfy Granny Grip's avarice, was it wonderful that she should steal if she had opportunity, and garnish her begging tale with a variety of touching circumstances, which might or might not have taken place? Poor Bat! she did not know how wrong it all was; how should she? Who had ever thought of taking the trouble to tell her? How could she guess that in so doing she was grieving Willie's Friend, who, when He was on the earth, loved the little children, even such as she? How could she know that He is still loving even the poor lost lambs of his flock? How could the little outcast know all or any part of this, when she had never even heard of the existence of a friend upon the earth? and as to heaven, there was no such place to her! Was it, then, wonderful that she was just the idle, wicked, beggar girl I found her? Are *you* sure, young lady, that you would have been so very much better if in her place?

And, oh! when you think it so dreadful (and are right in so thinking) for such as Bat

to lie, and swear, and steal, think how much worse it must be in you, with a nice house and kind friends, warm clothes and plenty to eat, to tell the little fib, or take what is not your very own, or give way to the fit of temper, and sulk for an afternoon, because Mamma or your governess thinks it not fit for you to go out! And then you know so much more of what Jesus wishes than little Bat did; and remember there is a text in the Bible about people who have and know much, being expected to do more, and those who know less not being punished for not doing what they were ignorant of.

We on some days (particularly if there were one or two villages in the neighbourhood) used to separate into pairs, and agree to meet at some place a few miles further on, each pair taking a different route, and so scouring the country pretty effectually, and not attracting so much attention as one large party would have done. Bat generally went with one of the women, and many were the clothes-lines she helped to thin; and on different occasions she actually ventured into three hen-houses, and made spoil of the eggs, with such com-

posure and dexterity, that she was openly commended by Ben, who, so far from regarding the theft as any crime, saw in it only the promise of future usefulness—to himself.

And this brings to my recollection a circumstance that happened shortly after the last and most daring depredation on the hen-houses. It was a fine morning in the end of September, and as the tramp was to be a long one, we started early; about four or five o'clock, I should say. Bat was in company with Granny and one of the women. We had not gone far before we came to a "bien farmsteading," the mistress of which had, on the previous night, roughly refused a bit of bread to one of the gang. So they were not sorry to find, on peeping cautiously about, that none of the inmates were visible; and, from sounds proceeding from a washing-house at a little distance, that the servants were engaged there, and not likely to disturb our movements; also, that the kitchen door had been left "on the sneck;" that is, unlocked. To my horror, Mrs. Grip took Bat aside, and said, in a significant tone,—

"I warrant there's sum'mat in that kitchen

worth having. Ye're a sharp young 'un. If ye make no noise, ye'll never be found out. I'll watch about for ye."

Bat hesitated, and then said, "Oh, Granny, I'se afeard; it's awful wicked like;" and was going on further to beg off, when Granny caught hold of her arm like a vice, and, shaking her furiously, exclaimed in as loud a tone as she dared,—

"What *you* got to do wi' bein' wicked, eh? Ye're as wicked a brat as ever I set eyes on! It's no good *you* botherin' about 'bein' wicked.' You got to do as ye're bid, I tell ye, or I'll tell Ben on ye; and what did ye get last time for botherin'? Mind that."

Poor Bat was by this time fairly cowed; and the old hag, seeing that she was too much frightened for her purpose, changed her tune.

"Come now, dearie, ye're Granny's own jewel when ye're good. Poor old Gran, ye oughter do anything for her, when she loves ye that much."

I certainly should not myself have taken Granny as a picture of maternal love; nor, I suspect, did Bat; but the fear of offending her had the desired effect. And taking the bag

that was held out to her to hold the spoil, she went to the door, opened it quietly, and, though trembling at first, soon became excited at seeing some cold meat and bannocks on a shelf, which she hastily put into her bag, together with some linen which had been airing at the fire. Then waxing bolder (at the sight of Granny's approving face outside the window), she opened all the drawers in the dresser, and rifled them of whatever she fancied would be least likely to be known, and was going away, when something bright tempted her eye. It was a tin money-box, and very heavy; so she took that too, and, well burdened, walked quickly off, closing the door carefully behind her. She was received with applause by Granny and the other woman, and then the trio hurried as fast as they could across the fields to the high-road, without meeting any one—it not being more than half-past six, and the sun had not been long up.

We kept on the high-road for some time, Granny expecting to meet the rest of the party, which at last we did. The account of Bat's prowess was most graciously received by

Ben, who declared she should have one shilling of the money, besides a full share of the meat and bread.

And then we adjourned to a wood near, to examine the contents of the bag, and to consider how to dispose of it in the manner least likely to be detected.

It was decided, after much cogitation, that Ben should proceed to the nearest town, where was a receiver of stolen goods, a person with whom they had transacted business of a similar kind before.

But, as it was very probable that Ben might be recognized as having been in the neighbourhood at the time of the robbery, it was thought advisable for him to change his dress. For that purpose he untied a small bundle in Granny's charge, took from it various articles, and retired for a few minutes.

Presently there appeared an aged man, with long white hair and beard, and only one arm; the other was an empty sleeve pinned up to his breast. His dress consisted of a long brown coat, whole but threadbare, knee-breeches, and gray stockings. He had no hat; but when he drew near he made a low

bow, and began in a cracked, meek sort of voice, which trembled very much,—

"Christian people, have mercy! pity the poor! I'm an ould man. I'm cowld and hungry. I've had twelve childer, and seventy-two grandchilder. Christians, be pitiful! I'm a harmless crayture. I lost me arm a matter of forty years ago, and never done a hand's turn with it since. I'm cowld and hungry," &c. Here he was interrupted by Mrs. Grip.

"Hould yer noise! ye'd a first-rate feed o' the meat and bread; and if ye tell me that wig's not warmer than any two hats, I say ye're an ould hypocrite."

The old gentleman burst into a roar of laughter, in which he was joined by all present, and pronounced to be perfectly disguised. To complete his costume, he selected from Granny's basket a few of the least vile of the songs, and one or two stray tracts, which he was supposed to be selling; and, accompanied by the big girl in the character of his daughter, and to carry the bundle of stolen articles, the worthy pair set forth. They were absent for a week or more, and did not rejoin our party

till we had put twenty-five miles between us and the scene of Bat's exploit.

When Ben came back, his news was very satisfactory. The aged Irishman, Thady O'Flanagan, had never been mistaken for Shooter Ben, the able-bodied poacher. And, moreover, no one suspected any of their gang of the theft; in fact, a paragraph had appeared in the local paper, headed, in large letters, "Daring Burglary!" which set forth, in glowing colours, the danger of the inmates from three, if not four men, whom a servant-girl (now she thought of it) remembered having seen about the night before: and one of the farmer's daughters was certain she had heard men's voices in the kitchen;—it was her father snoring in an adjoining room, for I had heard it too.

Nobody suspected poor, little, frightened, tempted Bat, driven to it by the fear of a cruel beating. Better far for her if they had! Many a laugh the tinkers had about it; they all thought it such a capital joke.

I doubt whether Bat agreed with them fully: if she differed, it was not from conscientious views. But now the cold weather was coming

on, the child's life was harder than ever. And sometimes, when she met troops of merry children coming from school, all comfortably dressed and happy, oh, how she envied them! Why could she not do so?—but she was still the tinker's child, and she couldn't be good if she tried. So Granny had often told her, and enforced the precept, as we have seen. In fact, she found favour in the eyes of her friends just when she had done things which *even she* felt to be wicked.

One day a little girl, less than Bat, was sitting at a cottage-door eating her dinner. Bat went up to her, eyeing the plate hungrily, and begged. The little girl looked wonderingly at her, got up, and then said, "I've just done, so I'll give you my potato; sit down." Bat sat down on the stool, took the plate on her lap, and finished the remains of the dinner, her hostess watching her with delight. When she had done, the little one said, "Do you know why I gave you a bit of my dinner?" Bat did not answer, so she continued—"Because my verse in school to-day was, 'Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you;' and I thought if I was

hungry, and had seen you eating your dinner, I would have liked you to have given me a bit."

Bat was taken by surprise. This was a new light to her, so she asked her friend to say it over, and repeated it after her till she could say it herself.

And they parted; the one to her school, where she learnt to be good; the other to hers, where she was taught only evil continually.

But like the tiny seed dropped into the ground, the word of the little child (or rather her Master) was not forgotten; it was hidden, but not lost.

CHAPTER VIII.

BAT IN DIFFICULTIES.

THE lesson given by the cotter's child was indeed hidden. Days and weeks passed by, and it bore no visible fruit; but, sharpened by the act of kindness, it had gone home to the heart of the little heathen, and that was no small thing: for the heart of the outcast, if you can but touch it, is just as powerful and responsive a spring as is yours, my dear friend, who please yourself and annoy your friends with the delicate intricacies of your sensitive feelings. I confess I was disappointed that the seed thus sown did not immediately spring up, and bear fruit an hundred-fold; quite forgetting an ancient story in which this same process is represented as taking a certain time, and going through gradual stages, even in the best soil. And the heart of my small friend

was far from that, being already overgrown with evil weeds, all in a most flourishing state. The wonder to me was, how it ever found its way through them at all. But there it was, and it must grow.

Bat being now, as Granny and Ben considered, fairly entered on a course of crime, they used to trust her by herself on short begging expeditions, hoping thus to awaken sympathy for a lonely child, which might not be felt if she were in the company of others.

On one occasion, when the gang were living at the town of Drumbie, she was despatched to Craig, a country-house in the neighbourhood. We had never been there before, but Granny had found out that it was the residence of a rather strict Justice of Peace, by name Mr. Hepburn, who had an especial dislike to trampers, which made it inconvenient for her to venture to the house; but he was known as a kindly man, not at all likely to be hard upon a child.

So off we went, Bat feeling quite important and happy at getting away from her dear friends.

We passed the lodge unperceived; and now

the difficulty was to choose which way to go to the house—whether by the winding approach, neatly gravelled and rolled, or by the humbler back road. Bat decided on the latter, as being less likely to meet the gentleman, whom she looked upon as a sort of "police,"—a class she regarded with unmixed horror.

How beautiful the place looked on that autumn day! The beech hedge had turned red, and the woods all manner of splendid colours. The sun had a sort of clear glow, making everything look brilliant, even to the spider's web on the rough fence. It was a day to make even the homeless feel for the time happy.

Bat was enjoying it in her own way, and amusing herself with tossing up the fir-cones and horse-chestnuts which lay upon the path, when, as she drew near some out-buildings, her pleasure was stopped by a boy rushing out of the hedge and pouncing upon her, followed by an immense Newfoundland dog.

Bat was always dreadfully afraid of dogs, and gave a startled cry. I don't think the boy at first meant to do anything to her; but seeing her fright, could not resist adding to it

for fun. The first thing he did was to ask her what she was doing there; and, without waiting for an answer, informed her "he didn't let thieves go to his house; and if she tried, he'd make the dog bite her.

"It's not your house," replied Bat; "it's Mr. Hepburn's house."

"So much the worse for you, then; for Mr. Hepburn runs girls down with his dogs, and eats them for dinner." So saying, he placed himself directly in her way, and stooping to bring his face in a level with hers, began a series of hideous grimaces. Bat was used to ugly faces, and, not caring, tried to pass him, when he suddenly said, "Here, Nep, bite her; hiss, boy, bite her!"

Nep stood still, wagged his tail, shook his head, and said as plainly as he could, "Won't; you're not my master."

The amiable youth had managed to get Bat between the dog and himself, knowing that she durst not pass the dog; and pulling a strap out of his pocket, took care not to let her past himself. Nep thought the strap was meant for him, stopped wagging his tail, and gave an ominous growl.

The lad caught hold of Bat, and again ordered the dog to bite her, at the same time threatening him. Nep growled louder than before, and poor Bat shrieked with terror. That scream saved her. It reached the ears of some one whom her tormentor had in reverence, and before she knew where she was, a middle-aged gentleman caught hold of the boy with one hand, and applied the strap pretty sharply to his shoulders with the other, saying, "You young wretch, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! Let me catch you teaching my dog tricks and frightening girls again, and I'll give you some more, my man! Be off to your work!"

The lad went off whimpering, and his master coolly took out a knife and cut the strap in pieces. He then asked Bat what she wanted, and what the boy had said, and hearing her errand, and that he ate girls, said, —

"He was right so far about my not liking beggars, but I don't eat 'em. I would rather be excused. I lock them up, though," looking very fierce; "but you may go now. Never come back again, or I can't answer for what

may happen to you. Stop, here's a biscuit for you. I meant it for you, Nep, but you'll get another. Come."

And he turned away to the stables, and Bat went the way she came, much relieved, but hardly knowing what to say to Granny. She ate the biscuit, however, lest questions should be asked.

When she got back to the town, she went straight to the lodging-house where some of the party had put up for the time. It was a dismal contrast to the lovely country we had just left. The narrow close, with houses nearly meeting overhead, into the dirtiest of which Bat turned, up a filthy stair, on which we passed a disreputable-looking woman, who saluted her with a snarl for being back sooner than was expected, and pushed her into the back room, whence issued sounds of rude merriment and loud voices, and the mingled smell of stale tobacco and spirits.

There was Granny busily occupied in sorting their unlawful gains into several heaps on the floor, grumbling to herself the while. Nearer the window the two other women, and three or four strange men, were sitting

and lounging round a broken table, with a bottle, some mugs, and a torn greasy pack of cards; also in the middle a very considerable pile of money, copper and silver. They were evidently gambling as fast as they could. Ben was not there. So engrossed were all with their own business, that the entrance of Bat seemed not at first noticed. She was in no hurry to draw attention to the fact, but slunk into a corner, too thankful to escape observation. Granny's watchful eye soon detected her, however, and calling her from her retirement, commanded her to "show what she had got."

Bat, of course, had nothing to show, and on the reason being demanded, at first told the truth. *That* not believed, and her memory sharpened by a few cuffs and oaths, she strung together an impossible string of lies, which were equally unsatisfactory. The interest of the game had flagged, or perhaps all the money had changed hands, so, for want of something better to do, the majority of the gamblers turned upon poor Bat; and in the scene of confusion that ensued, fighting, screaming, blows and curses flying about, the

unfortunate child seemed likely to be seriously ill-treated, when a heavy step was heard on the stair, and a voice of authority demanded, "What is the row about?" Of course, there were contradictory replies in plenty, but the combatants fell back before Ben, the new comer. Even Granny (who had never lost hold of Bat) resigned her prey into Ben's hand, who held her till he heard the story, and then gave as his verdict, that "they ought to mind their own business, and leave him to manage his'n. Bat belonged to him, and he wasn't agoing to have her licked by anybody else." So saying, he pointed to a heap of straw in one corner, and ordered her to lie down, warning everybody not to touch her at their peril. I daresay it arose from the spirit of contradiction on Ben's part. He was always glad to oppose Granny, and at times his conduct was shocking enough; but whenever he had an opportunity of doing so, he invariably took Bat's part. The child, too, regarded him with an odd mixture of affection and dread. There were dark rumours of his once having killed a child. And once, when Bat had more than usually offended

him, he reminded her of it, and set before her how easily he could do it again. To-day Granny twitted him with it in reference to his being tender-hearted about Bat, and was informed that "doing it easy wasn't, in his mind, half as bad as by inches," and that "he wasn't going to have any 'chaff' on the subject;"—which he enforced by an exhibition of his clenched hand and brawny arm, with such effect, that the old lady returned quietly to sorting her rags and stuff."

Before Bat went to sleep that night, she thought a great deal of the kind gentleman, and wondered if he would have given her leave to beg if he had seen the consequence of coming home empty-handed? Also, if it would be so very much worse to be locked up than to be in the midst of scenes like what had just taken place? Could it be really worse than the kicks, curses, threats, and blows which were almost her whole life? Then she wondered if there were any people in the world who did not do these things, but followed the words of the cottage child, "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you." If there were any, how happy

they must be! And how happy their children and people that lived with them must be! But, then, were there any such? Yes; she was sure there were! Mr. Hepburn was one. The woman who washed and bound up her foot was another. Bat was not philosopher enough to know metaphysically that in order to be happy we must be good ourselves; but she felt that her only companions, as well as herself, were very wicked, and she knew that she was very miserable. And her notions of earthly good were just the reverse of all this. While thus wondering she fell asleep.

Next day, and the next, and the next, no notice was taken of what had occurred; but after making pilgrimages to all the farms and villages round, Ben took it into his head to make another trial of Mr. Hepburn's back door, and hoped to elude him. So Bat was to be sent again, but to make a round of several miles under the charge of one of the women, and be left at a certain cross-road to come home by Craig later in the day, when she might expect to be more successful than before.

This plan was communicated to her, and

she was told that if she did not bring home something it would be the worse for her. Strange to say, Bat seemed charmed with the prospect, and promised everything.

In the next chapter we shall see how she succeeded.





CHAPTER IX.

AN UPWARD STEP, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

THE ready agreement of Bat with what was required of her completely satisfied her master, and he remarked to his companions, "What a likely young 'un she was when spoke fair;" adding that "Mrs. Grip was enough to spoil the best hand with her crabbedness; there never was no satisfyin' of her!" Bat meantime had formed her own plan, and, young as she was, had long ere this discovered the value of keeping her own counsel. So she and the elder of the women set forth on their round, and making a good wide circuit, found themselves at the cross-road, on the other side of Craig, where Bat was to part company, at about four o'clock.

The days were now shortening, and on this dark afternoon, with the leaves falling thickly

from the trees at the roadside, it looked very dismal. I thought, what a dreary position for so young a child, to be alone on an unfrequented road, on such an errand! It would be dark, too, long before she could reach her wretched lodging. But she seemed quite to have formed her own plan, as I said before, and prepared to act on it. It was nothing very mysterious, only this:—

When she got to the gate (it was not the one she had passed before, and there was no lodge), she meant to avoid the back road for fear of her enemies, the boy and the dog, but to keep to the carriage-drive, hiding behind the evergreens if she heard any one, and so to reach the back-door; if she met Mr. Hepburn, to tell him her story, and ask if he would let her get something at the house.

While thus turning the possibilities of the case in her mind, she espied something gleaming among the leaves on the road. She went and picked it up, and found it to be the steel fastening of a leather purse, which from its weight must be full of money, and not being tarnished, could not have lain more than a few minutes.

Bat's thievish propensities at first prompted her to hide it and take it home to Granny; but then she thought, "It's no mine; maybe better lay it down." She stood contemplating it, much tempted. There could be no harm in taking care of it? No, but if she took it home it would be no longer in her power to do so. A sudden thought flashed upon her; something said to her, "This is the time to do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you!" Conscience triumphed, and Bat hid it in her bosom, and ran to the gate as fast as she could and along the approach. She might yet be in time to find the owner. To her great joy she saw at a turn of the road a stout figure in a gray suit and wide-awake, whom she knew to be Mr. Hepburn. The purse must be his! She ran on till, when within a few yards of him, she ventured to address him with, "If ye plase, yer honour!" No reply. "Maister!" As little success; his honour certainly must be dull of hearing! But Bat's profession was to be pertinacious, so she shot past him like an arrow, and turning sharp round, faced the astonished gentleman, who stood like one transfixed.

"Humph! what d'ye want?"

"If ye plase, kind gentleman!" began Bat; but he recognized his friend.

"No, I don't please. I tell you what I told you before, I'll have all beggars locked up."

"Ye'll maybe keep a' yer siller locked up syne," responded Bat; "belike ye'll no ken this?" slowly producing the purse. "I found it on the road."

Mr. Hepburn hastily passed his hand over his pockets. His purse was gone! This one looked very like it; yes, there was his name on the back! Had she picked his pocket? He had heard of such things. No; he had seen no one on the road; besides, there was the mark from lying in the wet mud. He had no doubt the child's story was true. But it was a very strange act for a tramper's child; little doubt a thief, too! He must make acquaintance with so singular a specimen.

"What's your name?"

"Bat."

"Bless my soul, what an odd name! Is it a boy's or a girl's?"

"Don'no'; leastways I'm a lassie."

"Humph!"

Did you ever notice people always say humph! when they didn't know what else to say?

"Who's your mother?"

"Dead."

"Who's your father? Where is he?"

"Don'no'!"

"Whom do you live with?"

"Lives with our folk—Granny and them. Ben says I belongs to him."

"I suppose you beg and steal round the country?"

Bat pondered for a moment, and then replied evasively,—

"You'll be a police?"

Mr. Hepburn smiled. "Not exactly. You need not be afraid of me just now. I suppose you never tell lies?"

"Whiles."

"Humph! that's honest for once. Were you sorry when your mother died?"

"Don'na mind; it's lang syne."

"Are Granny and them, as you call your friends, good to you?"

The child looked shrewdly at him, grinned, and returned the question—"Do you think I looks like it?"

There was a pause.

"What made you give me my purse back again, eh?"

Bat's eyes filled; she looked wistfully in his face, and said,—

"Ye was good to me t'other day when I was fear'd, and ye gae me a bite when I was hungry. I was sent to see what I could pick up at yer doors, and ye gae me a kind word. Bless ye! it's no sae mony I gets. I thocht I'd do as muckle for you if I had the chance. Ye tell'd me no to gang to the house, and I didna; and I took naething frae the drying-green, and this" (pulling up her ragged sleeve to show a blue mark all down the arm) "was what I got by no doin' it. But I minded the day, when I found the pouch, 'Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you.'"

I saw something twinkling about the old gentleman's eyes, and after fumbling in his purse, he produced half-a-crown.

"Poor little one, take this. Ugh! the brutes! Take it, child."

But Bat was too prudent for that.

"Na, na; if I hae that, they'll ken I seed ye, and I'll be half kilt; but if ye'll let me gang to the door, and get a wheen scraps, I'll thank ye kindly." And drawing nearer to him, she added in a low hurried tone, as if afraid of being overheard, "Dinna let on ye hae seen or spoken wi' me the day, or my life's no safe! We'll leave this pairt in a wee whilie, sae just haud yer tongue."

"Hold my tongue! Pretty way to speak to a magistrate, let alone John Hepburn of Craig, Esquire! Well, Bat, you are blessed with coolness. But you shall have the scraps; come to the back-door."

Bat followed at a respectful distance. Presently her conductor spoke again:—

"Well, child, wouldn't you like to be taken away from these horrid relations of yours, and lead a different sort of life?"

This was an unfortunate question, as it aroused all Bat's old suspicions. So, instead of eagerly catching at the implied offer, she merely said,—

"Don'no' what ye ca' revelations; but I wouldna seek to be locked up."

We were now at the back-door; and by the order of the master, Bat was enriched with a good store of broken meat and bread, though cook obeyed the order with a toss of her head and upturned nose.

When we got home we found all the party in a "great taking." Something had come to their knowledge which made it desirable for them to move out of the way of the police; and the removal was going on actively. Bat's gains were a peace-offering, and her services made available, as were those of the men who were in the house the day of the "row." So by nightfall we were all—now a larger party of six men and four women, besides children—encamped in a sort of ravine in the side of Drumbie Craig, a hill about four miles from the town, and on the outskirts of Mr. Hepburn's property.

The ravine was a capital place for an encampment. It had formerly been the bed of a mountain torrent. Now it was all covered with thick green sward, except just in the hollow, where some immense boulders and loose pebbles showed where the stream had been. The upper part of the banks and

towards the foot of the hill, was thickly planted with young fir and larch trees, with an undergrowth of whins, so that we were likely to remain unseen and undisturbed for a long time, if only we could keep quiet. Here, then, we were concealed, and at rest for several days, only lighting a fire at nights, and the men venturing out early in the morning, and not returning till dark. No questions were asked in the hurry as to how Bat had found such favour at Craig, so nothing was heard of her interview with Mr. Hepburn.

As quietness was the order of the day, her talents were turned to the peaceful occupation of making brooms of the heather which grew in quantities on the top and sides of the hill. Thus matters went on, and no idea of moving seemed entertained, though there were as many brooms made as could be conveniently carried for sale. One evening, the men who had lately joined us came home without Ben. One of them proposed lighting a fire. Granny objected that the smoke would be seen too far off so early; and the man in reply whispered something in her ear, the effect of which was that Bat and the other children were sent to

gather sticks a good way off. Bat for some reason suspected that the man's words were about her, so she managed to get back before the rest, laid down her bundle of sticks, and creeping round the bushes, came close to the party. They were, as she suspected, sitting in solemn conclave, and she heard her own name several times. The man who had spoken first seemed uneasy about something his companions were urging him to do. One of them said: "There'll be no peace if she takes to that. She'll be peachin' on us to every old magistrate she meets. Gals is worth nothin' if they turns soft."

"What are ye afear'd of? It's over in a twinkling. Nothing easier," said another.

"Not in the camp, though, or old Hepburn 'll 'speck us. Do it quick in the wood, and maybe she'll be dead o' cold," was the advice of a third.

"Do it yourself, then," returned Mike impatiently.

"Nay, lad, here's courage to thee!" chimed in Granny, tossing off a glass of whisky, and refilling it for him. "As for Ben, he need ken nought about it. Say we lost the bairn,

and think she fell i' the dark into Drumbie Loch. I's not agoing to be bothered wi' Ben's fancies a' my days. He daren't speak; I know what'll silence him if he do—somethin' he don't like to hear tell o'."

Bat had heard enough to frighten her, so she crept back to her bundle of sticks. Soon after her name was called, and she walked into the circle.

Granny began in a coaxing voice: "Bat, darlint, gang wi' Mike to meet Ben: he's to bring the supper frae where it's been left. See, here's the cloth to put it in."

Bat knew it was useless to refuse; it would only hasten her fate, whatever that might be. She obeyed, trembling in every limb. The man took her hand, and went before her, talking not unkindly all the way. When they had gone a good bit, he dropped the cloth he held in his hand, and told Bat to pick it up. She now quite saw the plan, and began to pray for mercy. His tone then changed. An oath, a heavy blow, and the child lay motionless at his feet.

He scarcely looked at her. I fancied his heart smote him, ruffian as he was. He

hurried away; I heard the branches clash as he strode along.

All was still for many hours; no one came near the place where Bat lay; but the little pale face was turned up to heaven, and the shadows of the trees, in the moonlight flickered and danced upon it. And One looked pityingly down on the forsaken child—the same who cares for the little sparrows, and tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.

So the long night passed, and Bat knew not that she lay upon the brown heather, with nothing but the trees between her and the sky. It might have been a bed of down, it would have been the same to her. She felt not the sheet of hoar-frost gently stealing over her; she was too quiet and still for that; so still, I thought she was dead—so no doubt did Mike, for he never came back to see.

But at early dawn there was a stir among the branches, and out sprang—not a man; no, but as good a friend for Bat—Mr. Neptune Hepburn, the dog whom the boy had vainly tried to set upon her. Mr. Nep had been on a hunting expedition on his own account,

and smelling mischief, had come to inquire into it.

There he stood, very much surprised, and not at all certain what a humane dog in his circumstances ought to do. So he first approached Bat cautiously on tiptoe, and snuffed all round her; sat down at her feet, and peered gravely into her face; touched her mouth with his nose to feel if it was warm, and said, "Humph!" exactly like his master. Having satisfied himself of the reality of her position, he did the best thing possible, and lay down on the top of her, keeping his weight off her chest, and set to work to lick all over and round her face, neck, and hands, putting his paw under her head, that he might perform the operation at greater convenience to himself.

This he continued for a long time, apparently with no effect. At last, Bat drew in her hand, and buried it in his warm, curly black hair. She then sneezed. Nep lifted up his voice and said, "A-yow, oo-oo-oh!" which extraordinary congratulation caused the sleeper to open her eyes. She was too ill to fear anything, but poor Nep was so wild with delight and eccentric in his language as to be enough

to frighten any one not used to dogs. She smiled in his face; and he then got up, and tried to make her do the same; but, not succeeding, gave vent to a series of howls, for help, I suppose. After one prolonged howl, more dolorous than the others, there was a far-off whistle, and a voice, far down the hill, called, "Nep, Nep, Neptune! hie, boy!" and then the whistle clear and long. Nep replied as loud as he could, and scampered off, returning in about five minutes with a man in gamekeeper's dress, with a gun in his hand, on whom Nep seemed expending all his overflowing affection. He seemed quite relieved of his responsibility now, and kept dancing round his friend, telling him all how and about it as plainly as dog could; and what was more, was understood. Bow-wow—I found her. Bow-wow—I did; not dead. Bow-wow-wow—I warmed her. Clever Nep! Bow-wow oo-oo-ooh! aye, ow! and Nep yawned and stretched himself in the fulness of his ecstasy.

"Good dog! capital fellow! down, Nep, good dog!" reiterated the man, as he lifted Bat, now fast relapsing into unconsciousness from cold and exhaustion. The kind man

took off his coat, rolled her in it, and carried her off in his arms, silently, except now and then applauding Nep, who trotted contentedly beside him, with his nose at Bat's feet. She continued insensible for the rest of the journey.

When she again opened her eyes, she was aware of lying in a soft bed, all wrapped up in blankets, and that the curtains had a great many bright colours in them. She felt, on trying to move, that her head was decidedly queer too; but, beyond this, had no idea how she came there, or of anything that had happened.

The motion brought a figure to the bedside, a cheerful-looking woman, with pretty soft eyes, and a thick white cap. Bat murmured some question, and the woman smiled, and held up her finger. "Hush! you're not to speak; you're all right now, just be quiet." She gave her a warm drink out of a jug at the fire, and advised her to go to sleep. Bat lay still and soon forgot all. I did not.

Robin Howe, who had found Bat, was gamekeeper to Mr. Hepburn. He took her to his own house, and the good wife did what she could for her: the result we have seen. The only difficulty now was to know what

was to become of the unfortunate little waif. This was referred to Mr. Hepburn. He thought the child (if sufficiently well) had better appear at a Justice of Peace Court to be held the following day, when she could explain how it all happened, as from the marks on her head there must have been blows. On the morrow Bat was taken to court, and gave her evidence very distinctly, telling where the camp had been, and what she had heard the gipsies say. Robin Howe confirmed her story, and the result of it all was, that the magistrates determined—

"That this child Bat, aged nine, whose murder has been attempted by some person or persons unknown, having no lawful protectors, or means of subsistence, shall be found guilty of the crime of vagrancy, and be placed in the Female Reformatory and Industrial School at Biggin, for the next six years, or till such time as she shall be able to go to service and provide for herself."

So Bat and I went to Biggin, under the guardianship of Mr. Hepburn, who promised to deliver her himself into the hands of the matron.

CHAPTER X.

MRS. PIN FEELS AN INCREASING RESPECTABILITY AND PLEASURE IN LIFE.

IT was late in the day when we arrived at Biggin, and stopped before a large house a little out of the town. Mr. Hepburn lifted Bat out of the dog-cart, and rang the bell. The door was opened by a young girl about fifteen, who being asked if Mrs. Brown were at home, curtsied, said yes, and invited him to walk in, at the same time leading the way across the stone lobby to a room at the other side. It was a tiny but cheerful sitting-room, with a few pictures on the walls, and a large arm-chair by the fire, of which Mr. Hepburn took possession. He had relieved Bat of the horse-cloth that had done duty as her cloak on the journey; and she stood by him in her old clothes.

After a few minutes, the matron came in. Mr. Hepburn seemed to be an old friend; and he briefly explained his business, stating, that as the magistrates had understood there would soon be a few vacancies, they had sent the child straight to the school, not knowing what else to do with her. He was going on to further particulars about Bat, when Mrs. Brown, wisely thinking she had better be absent, asked her if she were not tired, and rang the bell, which was answered by the same girl who admitted us. Mrs. Brown called her Mary, and said, "Take this little girl to the workroom; there is a fire, I think?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Keep her till I come: I need not tell you to be kind to her, Mary?"

"No, ma'am."

Mary took Bat's hand, curtsied, and led her out. We went along several passages, and passed many doors. All was very quiet, except that in one room we heard children's voices singing a hymn. Mary did not speak much till we got to our destination. It was a much larger room than the last. There was no carpet on the floor, but the boards were

very white. The sides of it were fitted with large unpainted presses, which jutted out a long way into the room. A large deal table in the middle, and a few wooden chairs, also unpainted, were the only furniture. An immense wicker basket stood at one end of the table, and beside it some pieces of cloth and flannel, evidently waiting to be cut out. It all looked awfully business-like and regulated.

Mary drew a chair towards the fire for Bat, another for herself, and sat down, looking just as business-like as the room, but very pleasant too. She asked Bat if her head were painful. Bat shook it, and did not speak. Then there was an opening of doors and a great trampling of feet under the window, likewise shouts of laughter.

Mary said, "They are gone to play in the yard; wouldn't you like to see them?"

They looked out of the window, and saw about twenty little girls, and two or three older ones. Some of them were settling to different games, some talking, some listening, some little, some big, but all happy, and all dressed exactly like Mary, in brown frocks, blue and white aprons, and white caps. Perhaps that

was what made Bat forget her shyness in surprise, for she began to cross-question her new friend, who was much amused by it.

"Why do you wear that?" pointing to her cap.

"We all wear it for the same reason as the miller wears his white cap."

Bat was still in the dark as to why, so Mary good-naturedly went on,—

"We should be cold without it. Our hair is short; besides, caps look nice and keep it clean."

"Is this prison?"

"Oh dear, no! Why?" exclaimed Mary, laughing.

"I didn't know; Mr. Hepburn said he locked up beggars."

"Oh no, it's not prison. We are all poor children who had no one to take care of us, and we got to mischief; so we were sent here till we can work and take care of ourselves. We are all very happy; but we have to learn some lessons and work as we are able. I am going away soon to a place in service."

Bat looked satisfied, and now began to make comparisons between Mary's dress and her own, who, noticing it, comforted her by

saying, if she were good she would have one like it.

Mrs. Brown now entered, and after a few kind words to Bat, said something to Mary about hot water and the No. 1 dormitory. Thither they proceeded. Mary cut off the elf-locks of the new arrival, and thoroughly washed her. I don't think Bat liked that much; but it was probably the first time she had undergone the operation, and so she felt it strange. Her attention was diverted by a new suit of clothes, stockings, shoes, and all.

"What did you say was your name?"

"Bat."

"Bat is not a nice name; it must have been meant for Betsy, so we'll call you that instead; and your number is 23."

They then went down to tea, and each girl had a great slice of bread and a good mug of milk and water. After that each brought her own work from the cupboard, and they sat down in classes. I was now transferred to Mary's pocket-pincushion, an extra elegance in which she indulged herself. While lying on the desk before her, I had time to look around the school-room.

There were thirty girls of different ages. Mary was among the six oldest, and there were some of five or six years. There were present the matron and a younger schoolmistress: besides these, I afterwards saw an experienced cook, laundress, and housemaid. These had their evenings to themselves if they chose, as their business was to instruct a different class of girls each week, in cooking, washing, and house-work, the class each time being composed of five young and two older girls; the nine youngest being exempt from hard work, except as an occasional variety, when they regarded it rather as a "ploy."

The first night after prayers at eight, Mary and her equals in age helped to undress and tuck in the little ones; and when they were safe in their respective nests, the six oldest read, separately, in Mrs. Brown's room for an hour.

There were three "dormitories," long rooms running side by side, and in each there slept eight little and two big girls, in small beds ranged down the sides of the room. At one end there was a larger bed for the superintendent; at the other, long deep tubs for

washing. The discipline, if strict, was necessary, and they were treated, as Mary said, kindly on the whole; certainly in a very different manner from that to which Bat had been accustomed.

Of course I only saw my companion now as one of a number, and not being in her possession, had lost the power of reading her thoughts; but I watched her with greater interest than the other children, and I thought, in the course of the time I stayed at the school, I perceived a marked improvement in her appearance and manner. She became more gentle, and lost that wild, careless sort of defiant look. Good regular food, exercise, and sleep, soon told their own tale.

Soon after New-year's Day, Mary and I left the school for her new place. It was a sad parting from the only home she had ever known: for, as she said to Mrs. Brown, "she minded the day she came from the court, where she had been taken for begging on the streets, a wretched, starving object;" even further sunk in the scale of intelligence than Bat.

Mary's place was in the family of a respect-

able draper in the town of Ardmill. Her mistress had taken a succession of girls from the school, and as from her service they always got places in steady, good families, it was looked upon as quite an advantage to be engaged by Mrs. Lister. Therefore, as you may suppose, Mary felt quite happy about her future prospects, though cast down at leaving her companions and everybody at school. She travelled by coach, and was set down giddy, cold, and weary, at seven o'clock at night, in the inn-yard of the "Blue Bell." She stood beside her papered trunk in the midst of the bustle, not knowing which way to turn. At last the guard, remembering his promise to see her safe home, shouldered her box, and bade her follow. Very soon he turned up a dark entry, lighted only by the solitary street-lamp in front of it, paused before a door at one side, set down her box, and gave a modest rat-tat at the brass knocker, which glistened like gold in the darkness. Some one opened the door; I could not see who it was. The guard said, "Here's the lass frae Biggin; good-night!" and hurried off.

The voice of the portress now made itself

heard for the first time. "Weel, can ye no come in? What ails ye, stan'in' atour yonder? My patience! gin ye had the rheumatiz into your head like me, ye wadna be sae keen for cauld air." Mary apparently rather mollified the speaker by lifting in her box, and saying she was sorry to have kept her in the cold, for she resumed, "Hows'ever, ye'll be nane the waur o' a drap tea. The mistress is no in the nicht hersel'."

"Indeed, ma'am," put in Mary, greatly rejoiced to find this was not the mistress.

"Deed me! I just winder whiles what she thinks cam o' folk afore she was born, or will after she's deid—what atween bairns bein' born, and auld folk deein', and silly bodies that canna tak' care o' theirsels. I'm sure I dinna ken what gars the minister let a'body come fashin' here; to be sure, his ain leddy's no stout, puir thing! maybe that's the way."

By this time we were in the kitchen, and I saw the speaker, a great, big, raw-boned old wife, with a vinegar countenance, a perfect curiosity of wrinkles. She was still speaking when interrupted by a little delicate-looking woman,—

"Hush, Eppie, for shame! let the girl have some tea, and no more talking. I daresay the children are in mischief, by their being so quiet!"

This supposition had the desired effect of sending Eppie off to see. Then Mrs. Lister showed Mary her room up stairs, opening off the children's.

I liked what I saw of Mrs. Lister exceedingly. She was just an active, sensible woman, with no pretension to anything more than her position warranted. She had none of that nonsense, too often mistaken for "gentility," which is so common among persons who don't sufficiently respect themselves and their position in life, whatever it be, to be content with it, but are always imitating something higher. Yet Mrs. Lister was more looked up to and respected than half-a-dozen fine ladies would have been. If a poor woman had two babies when only one was expected, she went to Mrs. Lister for a loan of a set of baby-clothes. If old Widow Dowie was "by ordinar' bad," Mrs. Lister had to go and doctor her. And so it went on, till, as Eppie said, when anybody was born, or anybody else

died, they all came to her, well knowing that there would be sympathy with their distress, and advice how to mend it. So well was she known, that ladies used to apply to her when they wanted to know anything about the poor, and did not like to find out for themselves. This would have tried my patience more than anything; and so it did Mrs. Lister's; but she always gave a polite answer, and all the information she could.

I was truly glad that Mary had fallen into such good hands; for her mistress was not so much taken up with out-door work as to neglect her home. On the contrary, she always seemed quite aware of what went on; and a more artful person than Mary would have found it difficult to deceive her.

I was one day stuck very firmly into a bundle of plain work, all cut out ready for sewing, and carried by the eldest girl, who accompanied her mother, to Martha Stitcher's, the sempstress, whose name I had heard several times in the course of the morning. For instance, "I must tell Martha this, I must not forget that, these seams are to be half an inch when finished," &c.

At last all the orders were given, and Martha understood them (more than I did, or, I suspect, little Jane Lister, wise as she looked).

Her mother wound up by saying, "Well, Martha, as your first parcel of work is done, you will take it to Miss Fitznobbe to-night, and then you will have your money. Pray do this as neatly as you possibly can, as you see the articles are finer than the last."

"I will, ma'am; thank you."

I was removed from the first bundle, and put into the second; so did not remain long enough with Martha to tell you much about her. I was taken to Miss Fitznobbe, and after having had the pleasure of seeing Martha liberally paid, and her work praised, was consigned to the bottom of a drawer in Miss Fitznobbe's room, where I lay quietly resting for a long time.

CHAPTER XI.

GOES TO LONDON AND SEES A LITTLE OF HIGH LIFE.

WHEN Miss Fitznobbe's maid came to pack up for the journey to London, I was taken out of my parcel, and put into the pincushion in that lady's dressing-room. While there, I heard a great deal of the splendours of London, and that Miss Fitznobbe was going to spend the "season" with an aunt, and to be brought out, with great pomp and distinction, by Lady Julia Fitznobbe, a very grand person, not her own aunt, but the wife of her father's eldest brother. Miss Fitznobbe never impressed me with any very violent interest or affection, but she was, I have no doubt, a very fair sample of a young lady of her class.

Everything about her could be described by one little word, "well." Well-bred, well-looking, well-mannered, well-dressed; playing,

singing, drawing, walking, talking, and dancing—all sufficiently well: and, I presume, thinking well too; though, all the time I was in her society, I never heard her give utterance to, or evidence of the existence of, a single thought that might be called her own. Still she was to me a specimen of a class, and I observed her with the same sort of interest she bestowed on a new species of giraffe at the Zoological Gardens, as she languidly surveyed him by means of her eye-glass, and dreamily remarked, "Dear me, what an odd creature! Pray, could you tell me what is the use of such an animal?"

Poor Miss Fitznobbe! I have no business at this date to be retailing her faults, and drawing morals from them; and, as she herself would have said, "I do excessively dislike being considered unpleasant," so I stop all comment upon her. However, it was to her I owed my carriage to London; and when there I endeavoured to make myself as useful as I could. I also hoped, and, in fact, felt sure, to see Milly again. How little I knew what "London" meant!

Many were the dinners, balls, routs, concerts,

and operas to which I accompanied my mistress; besides an endless round of shopping, visiting, and receiving visits, which occupied all the morning,—*i.e.*, from one o'clock to six at least; then dressing for dinner at seven; and two or three parties filled up the time pretty well till three or four in the morning.

My mistress seemed always satisfied with the amount of attention she received. Indeed she would have been difficult to please if she had not. Lady Julia made an excellent *chaperone*, never sleepy, and rarely cross; and with a handsome house and carriage, plenty of servants, and a large as well as fashionable acquaintance, was as delightful as any young lady of moderate desires could wish. Do you remember the day when I went with Nelly and Joe to the fair? I daresay it's an extraordinary question to ask, just after speaking of Lady Julia and Miss Fitznobbe's fashionable gaieties; but the delight manifested by Nelly and Joe in going to the fair was pretty much the same feeling in substance (though if anything more keen and real) as that experienced by Miss Fitznobbe in looking forward to going to Court. Yes, the great ambition of her past

life was to be gratified;—she was to be "presented." Now, this was a ceremony, from hearing so much of it, which I had for some time felt a strong desire to witness, and, perhaps infected by Miss Fitznobbe, to participate in. My wishes were to be gratified —I, too, was to be presented! though, up to the last moment, I was kept in woful uncertainty. But, oh, how my head flushed and my point glistened when I was called to perform the duty of fastening the bouquet to the bosom of Miss Fitznobbe's new Court dress! Lady Julia's own French maid, a person of sorrowful aspect and lanky garments, had superintended the toilette, and now when all was finished, pronounced the effect to be "ver' prattie; not tink you so? c'est très-jolie, n'est ce pas, Mademoiselle?"

We went to Court—that is to say, to the Queen's drawing-room at St. James's Palace; but really I, being unused to the royal presence, can scarcely tell you what I saw there; for what with beautiful ladies, and gentlemen in splendid uniforms, jewels, gold-lace, flowers, feathers, and everything magnificent in a great crowd, my poor head was quite turned, and I

am afraid my recollections of it are rather confused! But I saw the Queen; and when Miss Fitznobbe curtsied to her Majesty, I made the best obeisance in my power,—a sort of jerk was all I could ever attain to! Altogether, I don't think I enjoyed it so much as I expected, but I am very glad to have been there; and I've no doubt if many right honourable persons were to make known to you their candid feeling on the subject, it would be precisely similar to my own.

Some time after the presentation at Court, Miss Fitznobbe had been to an unusually quick succession of balls and parties, and one fine soft morning felt peculiarly *ennuyée* and out of sorts; so, as a cure for low spirits, her aunt proposed a turn in the garden, to which, in common with a select number of people in the neighbourhood, who could pay for it, they had a key, and the privilege of walking within its gates whenever they chose. It was a small space railed off one of the parks, and laid out as a garden; that is to say, there was grass kept very close and smooth, intersected with walks, once gravelled, and planted at regular intervals with sooty shrubs and evergreens,

which, in spite of the smoke, seemed tolerably happy. Within these precincts those ladies fortunate enough to have access to them used to take an occasional airing; and their nurse-maids and children resorted thither for their morning walk—which meant, as in other places, that the former met their friends and talked over things in general, and the details of their respective families in particular, while their charges dug holes in the walks, and rolled upon the grass, with no fear of being "run over" before their infant vision. Well, Miss Fitznobbe was, as I have said, taking her airing in the garden one fine day, and some subject appeared to be painful and irritating to her mind, for she seemed utterly to forget the words she used, and said, "I don't care a pin about it!"—as if a pin were the most worthless object in existence.

My feelings were so shocked that I felt I could no longer remain in the company of so inconsiderate a person, and, jerking myself out of her dress, fell to the ground: the first and last person I ever parted from in bad humour, which has, perhaps (though unwittingly), tinged my recollections of her.

There I lay on the walk for long. Many feet passed over me, and many snatches of conversation I heard: a tantalizing position, you will allow, for an intelligent pin—to lie on the ground, rained upon and trodden under foot, utterly slighted and forgotten every hour of the day.

At last, the fat little personage, called Lady Mary something, though usually addressed as Baby, being not yet two years old, escaped from the vigilance of her fine nurse, and sat herself down on the walk, regardless of her smart pelisse, to pick up the stones. She all at once gave a shout of delight, seized hold of me, and conveyed me to her ladyship's little, red, soft mouth; which, however sweet it might be for her lady-mother to kiss, did not at all suit me as a lodging. My anxiety on the point of choking my finder being agonizing—not to speak of feeling the place damp—I gave her a gentle prick on the lip, which elicited a roar. Her nurse caught her up, and took me from her. I went home with them, and congratulated myself on my happy exchange from Miss Fitznobbe's society to that of *Lady* Mary, or, as she called herself, "*'Ady*

Baby." She was a happy little mortal when let alone, and not yet old enough to be spoiled by the attention she had paid to her; indeed, it was no more than most babies receive, whether *'adies* or not.

The little one, at this time, was no better taken care of than many babies of fashionable mammas often are. Her mother had a very small portion of her time to devote to "her darling," as she always called the child when they did meet; but then the excuse was always ready, "I am so very fortunate in my nurse; such a very superior person; she manages Mary a great deal better than I do. The little thing is always wilful, after a time, when with me. In the country, however, I shall have more time." Probably her ladyship was not aware how much of the management was kept up and exercised by terror of various kinds, the very vagueness of which powerfully affected the baby mind. Sometimes it was "the black men who eat naughty children as don't sleep;" then the big white lady, all white and cold, who "told nurse she was coming for Lady Mary if she didn't be good, and not cry at leaving mamma;" and, oh dear! how often

the vicious shake and hasty whipping forced the child to instant obedience and silence!

There is no telling how long this state of things might have continued, or the evil effect of it upon poor 'Ady Baby, as there were no other children, and the rest of the servants were either ignorant of it, or considered it "no business of theirs;" but it was brought to light, and ended soon after the family left London for my Lord's place in the country. Most of the London servants were either dismissed, or left in town. The nurse, however, was supposed to be such a treasure as to be kept on any terms. She made some fuss about increased wages, as a compensation for the dulness of the country; and her lady foolishly gave it, though rather surprised, as she had hitherto understood Miss Vickson's affection for Lady Mary to be so overwhelming that nothing short of death could separate them!

And to the country Miss Vickson accordingly went; but trouble awaited her there in the person of Mrs. Boardman, the old housekeeper, who had been "My Lord's nurse when he was a baby, bless him! a fine one he was,

to be sure." And the old woman used to come up to the nursery (much against the will of Vickson), and laugh till she cried again, as she recounted the doings of her boy. The little Lady Mary would crow and dance with glee, and one night wanted to climb on Mrs. Boardman's lap, when Vickson drew her back with, "Be still, Lady Mary! Well, Mrs. Boardman, ma'am, that's not my way of doing. Children give a deal of trouble if you only let 'em. Now, I just show 'em they are to obey me, and all the fuss is over then." Whether it was this speech, or the setting aside of all her old-fashioned notions, I don't know what aroused her suspicions, but Mrs. Boardman never felt easy about the London nurse. One night, when the house was full of company, she came up to the nursery, fancying all was not right, to see what her pet was about. I shall never forget the old nurse's look of horror, when, instead of the child's usual welcome as she entered the room, there was a low sob; and, on going to the bed, she saw the poor little victim staring at a pillow, with a night-cap on, at the foot of it!

Mrs. Boardman spoke soothingly to her, but the only answer was another sob. "What's the matter with my pet?" at the same time lifting the terrified child, who clung to her, quivering like a leaf. "What have they been doing to it, pretty, pretty?"

"'Ady Baby's f'ightened. Nusey say dat bitee me if I no s'eep," lisped the poor little one, pointing to the pillow.

Mrs. Boardman laughed loud out, and threw the pillow on the ground. She wrapped a blanket round Lady Mary, and took her down to her own room; then rang the bell, and sent the girl who answered it for Vickson.

Miss Vickson appeared, flushed with wrath, especially at being interrupted in a vigorous flirtation in the servants' hall, where she had no business to be. An angry colloquy ensued, and as Mrs. Boardman persisted in refusing to allow the child (who screamed at the sight of its nurse, now that it had a better protector) to return to the nursery without her, Miss Vickson stated her intention of giving warning, which the housekeeper accepted, adding that, "as the sight of her appeared to affect the child's nerves, she had better keep out of its

sight to-night, and refer it to her ladyship in the morning."

I need not say that Miss Vickson departed for London next day, and a worthier person was put in her place, to the evident relief of Lady Mary.

CHAPTER XII.

A SUDDEN REVERSE OF FORTUNE.

THE new nurse, Mrs. White, was a widow, and a much plainer sort of person than Miss Vickson; and my lady engaged her at the recommendation of Mrs. Boardman. Perhaps Lady Mary was not in such thorough discipline as she had been, but I never grieved over the change, as the life in the nursery was a much pleasanter one than under the rule of Vickson. Things now went on in their even course; the little woman grew fatter and rosier than ever. Indeed, her temper was much less fretful and passionate than formerly, and Mrs. Boardman was every evening a visitor in the nursery to see 'Ady Baby put to bed, often recounting to Mrs. White the horrors of the night "she found it out," and dwelling at length on imaginary ones, which "she had no

doubt were true, though she had never *exactly known* of them." In this, I think, the worthy dame exaggerated, but I have no doubt it was quite bad enough.

I felt quite a person of respectability in the family, as Mrs. Boardman had taken a fancy to my large head and stout figure,—somewhat like herself.

But every lane has its turning, and so happiness does not last for ever. At this time it was my misfortune to fall into the hands of a little boy named Charley, whose principal amusement, I am sorry to say, consisted in doing mischief. What do you think the young rascal did? He was seized with a brilliant idea how nice it would be if he could catch fish! And the piece of water most accessible to him being a horse-trough near his father's door, he determined to fish there. I should not have desired to interfere with his plans, particularly as there was nothing to be caught, if he had not, in the most cruel manner, crooked up my back to make a fish-hook of me! What I suffered you cannot conceive, nor would I harrow your feelings by describing it to you.

This dreadful state of things lasted only a few days (they seemed to me a few ages), when the bit of thread to which I was attached became untied, and I was precipitated to the bottom of the horse-trough. You may not believe me, but my first sensation was that of extreme pleasure at escaping from the clutches of Master Charley. If you have ever heard of the cold-water cure, now known by the fine name of Hydropathy, you will readily understand how the immersion soothed the frightful pain in my back. I must have been endowed with a remarkably fine constitution not to have sunk under the injuries I had received as Charley's fishing tackle;—by-the-by, I wonder how he would have liked to be doubled up into something a boy was never intended to be! I just wish little boys and girls would ask themselves that question before they commit acts of wanton mischief. After the pain of my ill-treatment had subsided, I began to weary of my watery solitude, and to feel an intense longing for a more varied and stirring life. I can quite sympathize with and understand the feeling of the man—wasn't it Robinson Crusoe?—

who composed and transmitted to posterity as his experience the lines,—

> "O Solitude! where are the charms
> That sages have seen in thy face?
> Better dwell in the midst of alarms,
> Than reign in this horrible place."

Solitude is much the same to a pin, whether in a desert island or a horse-trough. To be sure, I occasionally heard a faint murmur of voices when the men came to water their horses. But that only added to my misery; for though I tried again and again to make myself heard, no one ever would understand there was an intelligent individual in the watery prison. Indeed, could any of my old friends have seen me, they would never have recognized me, so altered was my appearance. I used to ponder, as I lay there, over the different stages of my life, the ups and downs, the changes of place and people I had seen. And as I thought over my increased knowledge of men and things, I could scarcely believe I was the same pin who reposed on the hearth-rug in Lady Dripley's drawing-room, and was thankful for even the meagre information of the fire. At last there was a stirring of the water. I heard grating sounds

on the outside of the trough, and oh, joy of joys! a plug near the bottom was taken out, and I saw daylight through the hole, for the first time for long! The water flowed out in an unbroken stream, till it was all drained off, leaving only the mud and dirt at the bottom: this a man shovelled out upon the road, and I of course was thrown out with the refuse. Ah, dear heart! as Mrs. Boardman would say, what changes! But fallen as were my fortunes, my native value was not lost sight of. An old man chanced to pass that way, and seeing a lot of rubbish on the road, came poking about and turning it over with a sort of crooked stick he carried in his hand. He apparently found little that even he cared to carry away, but his sharp eyes fell upon me; he stooped and picked me out of the muddy slime; he rubbed me clean between his finger and thumb, saw that I was all crooked up, but stuck me in his ragged coat-sleeve, mumbling, "A pin a day is a groat a year," and that "I might do if I was fettled up"—a remark as good as music to my ears. My new master was a perfect picture of misery. He was an old, old man, who might

once have been a sturdy labourer, but was now doubled and bent with age. He was clad in tattered clothes, which were only kept on his attenuated figure by means of a rope tied round his waist. His feet and legs, half-way to the knee, were encased in wisps of straw, wound round and round them, and fastened in some unknown manner. His physiognomy was even a clearer indication of the miser than the extreme poverty of his garments, so full was it of shrewd cunning and grinding avarice. Such was my deliverer; and, faithful to his word, he took me home to be "fettled up:" not that in this he was actuated by any feeling of benevolence; don't fancy that; no, pure avarice was Miser Scrape's one idea, for which he lived, or rather sacrificed his life. The home to which he took me was a species of hut, even worse-looking than its master, which suited his taste precisely, as he got leave to burrow in it undisturbed, for no one else would consent to live there. The utterly ruinous state of the place led folks to believe his own version of the story,—that he was a miserably poor old man, who could not afford to pay for a better house. In reality he liked

the place, because there were many hiding-holes in the turf walls and roof, where he had secreted considerable sums of money—what would have seemed, for any one in his rank of life, immense. Yet there they were in bags made of old stocking feet, and in cracked tea-pots, probably found on the road—such a luxury he never would have purchased. And at night (when the moon shone, for he never was guilty of the extravagance of a lighted candle) he would take down his hoards and count his money.

Well, but I must tell you what became of me all this time. The old man took me from his sleeve, and, with great pains and care, straightened my back so successfully that hardly any trace remained of my misfortunes; of course, the operation was painful in the extreme, but it was made bearable by pride and hope of again going about the world as a useful member of society. I was then consigned to a box with several others, the result of the day's gains in the pin way. There were many other pins in the box, and some of them said we were to stay there till there were enough of us to sell as pound pins.

This supposition proved correct, for although the process of collecting our number was slow, it went steadily on, and I have no doubt brought the miser more than one groat at the year's end. Each pin of the number had a history: some longer, some shorter; some quite new, with the gloss still on them; but all had a history, whatever it might be, whether more or less interesting. Few of them had seen as much of the world as myself, and not one had ever been to Court—a circumstance which gave me great importance among them.

When our master thought he had nearly enough of us, he used to weigh us every night till the pound of pins was complete, or as little short as he thought safe to risk. And then we were taken to a dealer in odds and ends, who often exchanged Mr. Scrape's collections for shillings and pence.

And so it came about that I was passed from hand to hand as a fraction of a pound of pins, till I arrived, in course of time, at the grocer's shop, No. 110 High Street, Kirktoun, Lintshire;—which was indeed a curious coincidence; for, as you may or may not remember,

it was in that good old town, though in a different shop, that I first entered active life as a pin of first-rate quality. Many things had come and gone since then, and here I was again as a pound-pin!

CHAPTER XIII.

AN OLD FRIEND.

I WAS sold by the grocer's boy to a fine-looking young man, whom I knew directly from his fresh colour as from the country. He did not seem used to dealing with such delicate things as pins, for when the boy asked him how many he wanted, he said, in a tone of good-humoured contempt, "A good few; the gude-wife's aye needin' them; an ounce'll maybe do; it'll tak' a gey hantle o' thir to mak'-an ounce!" The boy showed him what an ounce was, and then he said "he'd have some more." So another ounce was weighed, and I was put in.

I heard my purchaser say to the master of the shop, in answer to his inquiries, "He was gettin' on fine wi' his business as a smith, and the wife and bairns were real well!" He put

us in his pocket, and we went to stow away his purchases in the cart, already well laden with cumbrous iron implements, and other things. I soon remembered the road as the one we had travelled from the fair, and we kept on it till we came to the entrance of the village. We stopped before the white gate of a cottage of rather higher pretensions than the rest. It had windows in the roof, betokening two stories, a little porch, and a fresh muslin curtain in each of the windows, except the kitchen, which had flowering plants instead. It stood in the middle of an exceedingly pretty thriving garden, with plenty of roses, stocks, and pinks, besides common vegetables and "berry" bushes. Altogether it was as pretty a picture of a poor man's home as you could wish to see on a long summer's day, as that had been. Not such a very poor man either; for was not Alick Saunders the village smith? and was not there aye as much work in his smithy as he could get through? He was a lucky man Alick, too, in other ways, if one might judge by the blithe voice singing a sweet old song, the tune of which (coming through the open door we could not hear the words) sounded

marvellously like "There's nae luck aboot the house!" Alick opened the gate gently, but not so gently as to deceive the singer, for in an instant she was at the door with her baby in one hand, and a half-finished blue stocking in the other. A three-year-old boy ran down the walk before her, and was rewarded with a jump by his father. The minute I saw the smith's wife, I recognized a friend of my youth—Nelly, the spruce table-maid at Lady Dripley's, whom I used to be so fond of long ago. I had left her at the cross-road going home with Joe from the fair, a pretty slight girl, with no thought of care in her head, except the dread of a reproof from Miss Trimitt and Poke. And after what seemed to me now but a short absence, here I found her a sober matron, with a husband and two children to think of and care for. To be sure the change was all gain to her; her husband steady and affectionate, her children merry, chubby elves. But even their presence startled me, for it made me feel how time had flown. Still, Nelly's cares seemed to agree with her remarkably well, and I am not sure that, on the whole, her appearance had not improved.

The kitchen and house were quite a pattern of cleanliness and order, and Nelly seemed so thoroughly at home in all the details of housekeeping, and so accustomed to being wife and mother, that I was soon quite ashamed of myself for thinking of her as the girl whom all and sundry considered themselves privileged to reprove and direct. She really made a capital gudewife, and I was each day more provoked with myself for ever doubting her capability. Their garden was a source of never-failing interest to her and Alick; and it really was wonderful how they managed to keep it so neat, as Alick was all day at his forge, and his wife had her children, besides a dairy of four cows, to look after. She used to get her cousin, Mysie, whom I remembered Auntie teaching to fold the clothes when a little tot of six or seven years old, now grown a comely lass of sixteen, to come and stay all day to help her when washing or churning was in hand. An important person was Mysie; her father still lived in his old room in the same house with Auntie, the difference being, that instead of Auntie working for him and his children, as well as for her own husband,

Mysie now did all the rough work of both rooms—besides cooking—except, of course, on the days she went to Nelly's, when, like other people, she could not be in two places at once. How Nelly's children, especially wee Alick, enjoyed those days! for though mammy was always merry, and very fond of her chicks, still she could not be expected at her age to jump about and play hide-and-seek with them as Mysie did. After her work was done, Mysie could spin a top, make a daisy-chain, plait rush-caps, bark like a whole kennel of dogs, play at "cocks;" in short, there was no end to her accomplishments.

Nelly had not forgotten the lessons of tidiness she learned as a girl; and many things she had thought *unco fashious* then, she now found to be of great use to her. Perhaps you don't understand what "unco fashious" means? It means just the thing I often heard Miss Fitznobbe call "a great bore!" Oh! how many nice useful things, even the very highest and most interesting, are stigmatized by foolish children, and older children too, as "great bores!" And yet, some time or other, how glad we should often be to know, and be

able to do, the very thing we most scorned as a bore! Now if Nelly, instead of setting herself to learn and remember these tiresomely necessary sort of things, had contented herself with slurring them over, and listened to that lazy "It'll do well enough," do you think she would have been as good a wife now? I suspect not. I suspect that the fact of his wife saying, "It'll do well enough," would not have made Alick in better humour with a half-cold dinner, tasting of grease and soot, or the children happier and cleaner while mammy was taking twice as long as necessary to prepare the said dinner.

I suspect ill-temper, unhappiness, and perhaps whisky and utter ruin, would have been the result, however well (at first) Nelly might have comforted herself with, "It'll do well enough." But that having never been her way, none of these dismal consequences took place. And Alick and the bairns and herself were as happy as the day was long, except those little vexations to which we are all liable.

I was not always stationary in the pin-*cushion, but* went about with Nelly. I liked

going to milk the cows: they were placid, gentle creatures, with sleepy faces, and smooth, sleek skins. It was quite a pleasure, too, to go into the dairy, all so nice and clean; new milk standing to cream in the wooden milk-pails, which were, oh! so white; and once a week there was the beautiful golden butter. Nelly never had any difficulty in selling her butter, for there were always plenty of customers in Kirktoun market, if, indeed, it were not all bought by the gentry round. It may seem wonderful that I should have been so long in Nelly's possession, and have seen so little of her father and mother, who lived so near. But you will please to recollect that, although a pin of most wonderful powers, the faculty of walking was denied me, and I was entirely dependent on others for moving from one place to another. So, as you perceive, the simple reason was, that as I had never yet been taken to Auntie's cottage, I had not seen her, except now and then for a few minutes at her daughter's. After a sojourn with Nelly, which I enjoyed extremely (indeed there was nothing to be seen or felt but industry and prosperity; time had made

changes, indeed, but they were all of a cheerful kind), I was one evening put into the shawl that baby was wrapped in, and taken along to his grandmother's. There was to be a tea-drinking in the cottage, and little Alick and baby were going, in great feather, with their father and mother.

It will be such a long story about my return to the cottage that I shall defer it to another chapter.





AUNTIE AND HER SCHOOL.

LUCRIA AND HER MINTER

Auntie, to be sure, wore marvellously well; and, while her children and grandchildren were there, you would not have perceived any difference, except, perhaps, that her hair was grayer, and her manner more that of an old woman.

But on her husband Time had laid his heavy hand. James Caw, when I last knew him, was a hale, strong, elderly man; and though he had a slight stoop about the shoulders, was as able for a good day's work as ever.

Ten years had passed over his head, and left him an almost helpless paralytic,—just able to potter about the doors, and give his opinion of the weather to passers-by, in a weak, tremulous voice. Before they sat down to tea, the shepherd entered, looking not very different, for ten years, one way or other; and with him a boy, whom I recognized as Tom. Fancy my astonishment when he was saluted as Jamie, the "toddle-ben" of old times! So he was. Tom by this time was a stalwart mason, going to be married.

And where was Willie, the patient watcher through the long nights? Ah! Willie's was

w a happier lot than any of his dear ones
t yet attained to;—he had gone to that
rious land, the expectation of which had
ngthened his fainting heart. His Friend
d long ago sent for him to dwell in the
ht of His countenance, whose smile had so
n brightened the dark days of the suffer-
boy. Yes, Willie's place was empty, his
unused, and, instead, there was a small
ve in the Auld Kirkyard, where the wild
get-me-nots and daisies grew, and where
ntie would take wee Alick sometimes on a
day, and tell him about his cousin Willie
was not dead but living in Heaven; and
bring him home, and show him Willie's
of tools, now carefully put by in the
ry, and only taken down periodically to
dusted.

ow, strange as you may think it, all this
not make Auntie wretched by any means.
you think that was because she did not
Willie, or did not really care so very
about him? Oh, no! that was not the
; but Auntie had read (in the same
where Willie had learned patience)
the country where death, sorrow, and

parting could never enter, and where "the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick;" and there, after a little while, Auntie knew she should meet Willie again.

So, looking to that time, she lived on in humble faith and patient hope, knowing, as he had done before, that it was, at most, but "a little while." Still, his absence made a blank that could never fail to be *felt*; and even now, the men and Jamie were silent at the mention of Willie's name. But I don't think the shepherd, though his father, felt it so much as Auntie. He looked on the boy's removal as a release from pain, and his friends were relieved from seeing him suffer. And then the shepherd's work took him away from home all day, and that made a great difference.

The various things in the room were wonderfully little altered. The bird was dead, and his place not filled up; but there was no other change, except a new pincushion,—another red cloth heart. I was glad of it; for really the old one was very uncomfortable, so gritty and horrid; but I felt, too, *as if* its departure were a mark of time.

In short, you perceive, I was myself fast lapsing into old age, and always regretting the past, as is the wont and privilege of those who have lived a long time in the world; a wearisome one, no doubt, to their juvenile friends, but a great satisfaction to themselves.

Nelly being settled so near them was a great pleasure to the old people; and, besides, they looked upon her marriage and position as Mrs. Saunders as something quite above the common. She had been their only child, and though Willie, while he lived, divided their interest, "now that he was better provided for," as Auntie said, "we have nane but Nelly and her bairns; and as for Alick, nae son o' our ain could hae been mair attentive—just a' as me and the gudeman could wish."

I wish that everybody had reason to be as well satisfied, and that all young men deserved it as well as Alick Saunders.

Another change had taken place in my absence, and I think I could explain it best in Auntie's own words, as I heard her tell it to the minister's wife, who one day asked her what first made her think of it; so Auntie said: "Ye'll mind, mem, as long as my gude-

man was able, he was foreman to Mr. Spence, at the farm up by, and he aye made a gude reg'lar wage; and there just bein' like him and me (puir Willie, dear lamb, didna eat muckle), sae lang as that lasted we did fine, and I had nae occasion for doing mair than just mind the house, and docker awa' among the bairns: but when he grew frail, and no able for's work, syne the shoe began to pinch; ye understan'? Nelly and John—that's the shepherd—and Alick, and Maister Spence, and a'body was real kind, and aye for helpin' wi' the siller—it's money you ca' it—but I couldna bide bein' obleeged like to some or onybody; and sae, it was putten into my heid, 'There's mony a puir body wad be glad to leave their bairns safe when they gang to work'—I mean bairns owre young for the parish schule, wi' a' thae laddies ruggin' and reivin' at the puir wee things—and sae I just thought that I could keep as mony as would come, and charge, maybe, a penny i' the week, if they brocht a mid-day piece wi' them; and I would gi'e them the Questions and Ready Madeasy (*anglicè*, 'Reading Made Easy'); and *I gar* the biggest o' them knit (no the wee

anes, for they're aye pokin' the wires into ilk ither), and its dune fine. I've, in a general way, maybe ten or a dizzen; whiles I'll hae only five or six; and whiles I've haen as mony as twenty."

"What age are your pupils?"

"Oh, maybe the youngest 'll be eighteen months. I dinna tak' them aulder nor five or six. Laddies comes wild by that, and as I dinna feel empowered to lick them, they dinna care for onything else."

"It must be very troublesome."

"'Deed, mem, they're just wonderfu' quiet. Jeames disna bide that muckle i' the house to weary o' them. He's aye daunderin' aboot some gate. I've been used wi' bairns a' my days; there's a deal in custom—and they're fond o' Auntie: our ain (or, at least, the shepherd's bairns) aye ca's me Auntie, and the wee things hae learnt frae them, I'm thinkin'. Puir things, I would miss them noo if they didna come! D'ye no find, mem, that ye miss even the bauther o' a thing, an aince ye be used wi't?"

I have no doubt myself that Auntie would have quite pined without her small pupils.

They came dropping in about nine in the morning, and most of them (except those whose homes were quite close) stayed all day, being provided with a "mid-day piece," which was given into Auntie's charge on their arrival, and delivered to them again at one o'clock. Many of them were quite babies, not two years old. These did nothing but play with each other on the floor. There would sometimes be a difference of opinion, and on such occasions Auntie would find it necessary to separate the combatants; but this was all that ever happened to disturb the harmony of the proceedings. And the older ones learned their letters, and two or three questions of the Shorter Catechism, besides being instructed in the art of knitting; and all who could speak sang hymns suited to their age, led by Mysie.

As Mysie did the house work, Auntie was able to give her whole attention to her school; and, at the same time, knit for her own benefit. At twelve o'clock, on fine days, the meeting adjourned to play on the green for an hour, under the superintendence of Mysie. Then *the dinners* were distributed; and at two they

all sat down in order till four, when they went home or to the houses of their relations. At all events, Auntie was left to take her tea in peace. Poor woman, she had earned it by a day's noise, though she was much less affected by that than many people would have been. Certainly the house would have been much duller without the chirpy voices and pattering feet.

The mothers, too, seemed to find it suitable; for it kept their minds easy to think that their little Johnies and Marys were not in danger of falling into the fire, or scalding themselves to death with pulling over the big kettle, or being drowned in the water-spout, or ending their brief and lively existence by any of those violent deaths which are the nightmare of mothers of promising scions not yet able to take care of themselves. There lay the secret of Auntie's success in her infant-school.

The wonder to me was, how James ever consented to allow his house to be be turned into a nursery for other people's children; but I daresay, poor man, he knew quite well, that if he did not, his weekly income would not

meet at both ends—often the reason for more fastidious people than James consenting to extraordinary measures. And then he liked to potter about his garden, and gossip by Alick's smithy fire; so, with that in cold weather, and his seat at the sunny side of the house in warm, he got on pretty well, and found the bairns, after all, rather amusing than otherwise.

And so the time sped on, till one day Nelly announced her intention of going to shop in Kirktoun next day, which she always did twice a year, paying a visit to her old mistress on her way home.

She wanted to know if her mother would keep wee Alick for the day, as she meant to take the baby with her to exhibit to Lady Dripley. Of course, Auntie was willing to undertake the charge, and it was settled that Nelly should bring him early next morning, and see if her mother had anything she wanted from the town.

CHAPTER XV.

MORE CHANGES.

NEXT morning early, Master Alick arrived, and his mother, after many injunctions to be a good boy, started on her journey, that she might be early in the town; for as she had a great deal to do in the way of shopping for herself and her mother, besides her visit to pay, she would want all the time She took me with her to fasten something about her dress, and went home, first of all, to meet her husband and the cart. Off we went, very comfortable, and full of business. Baby having judiciously gone to sleep, to the great happiness of all parties, Nelly got through her shopping very quickly, and to her great satisfaction; and then, as it was past mid-day, she thought it would be a very proper hour to go and see Lady Dripley. Alick agreed to

meet her at a friend's house in about an hour.

When we got to Lady Dripley's, Nelly sent in her name as Nelly Saunders, and was immediately shown into the drawing-room she had so often cleaned and dusted in days of old. Lady Dripley and Miss Trimitt were sitting at work, and welcomed her most kindly; asked all about her different relations, and listened to an affecting account of baby's sufferings during the process of vaccination. After that, Miss Trimitt left the room for a few minutes, and returned bearing a small tray, with a glass of ginger wine and some cake on it. She then wondered if baby could be prevailed upon "to go to her;" and that young gentleman's opinion being asked, he graciously consented, and was rewarded by the old lady dandling him as well as she was able; but feeling that too fatiguing—besides his showing an inclination to tug at the strings of her afternoon cap—she sat down at the piano with him on her knee, and played a jingling sort of tune for his edification. Baby luckily approved of it, and said, "A-goo-d!" and laughed till he shook again. Meantime his

mamma, relieved of his weight, stood up and drank the ladies' health. She soon after took her leave, in spite of baby's distress, who roared, and in his struggles pulled me out of her gown. So I was left on the floor, and parted from Nelly for ever!

Perhaps if I had been less taken up with watching Miss Trimitt's manœuvres with baby, I might have had the advantage of finding out from the conversation of Lady Dripley and Nelly somewhat more of the state of the family; but I missed the opportunity, and so had to wait and see for myself. I did not lie long on the floor, for the carpet was a new one, and the special object of Miss Trimitt's care. And it was rather an amusement to her to occupy her spare moments in walking up and down, picking up bits of stuff, ends of thread, anything she could find "littering about," to use her own words. So you may suppose I was not long left in my lowly position, but was only too thankful that when found I was placed in one of the china cups on the mantelpiece—an extraordinary irregularity for Miss Trimitt to perpetrate, and only to be accounted for by a fit of absence: if she had

had all her wits about her, I should, without doubt, have been imprisoned in her dreadfully tidy work-box. Miss Trimitt had become, since I last saw her, quite a little old lady. Her complexion was of that peachy kind that looks as if it were preserved in sugar; and she would as soon have thought of wearing her very best gloves on a week-day—an enormity she considered little short of insanity—as of sitting too near the fire, for fear of paying for the luxury with a red nose! I remember what lectures and warnings she used to lavish on her niece on this subject, and then end by saying in a plaintive tone, "In spite of all I can say or do, Milly is never happy unless she is poking her head up the chimney!" I really believe Miss Trimitt actually felt as if no greater calamity could happen to Milly than having a red nose! Lady Dripley had always been a complete contrast to her sister. She was as perfect an impersonation of placid contentment as Miss Trimitt was of fidgetiness, and I think her easy mind kept her much longer young like and comfortable. She was wonderfully little altered.

I heard the old ladies often, in the course

of the afternoon, speak of Milly and the children, and wonder when they would come in.

I could not quite understand this, for I had always fancied Milly living a long way off, in that great mazy London where I had been for so long, and yet never seen her, and felt quite itching to know the explanation.

After a time some one did come in, for I heard the front-door open and then close, and in a few minutes a lady in mourning entered the room, followed by two little girls in walking dress. I did not particularly look at the lady at first; it never struck me I had seen her before, and as she was saluted as "mamma" by the two old ladies, no associations were awakened in my mind. As they were leaving the room, Lady Dripley called after them, "Milly, wait a minute; who do you think has been here? Guess!"

I scarcely heard what followed, I was so stunned. Was this Milly? Oh, no, it could not be. This grave lady could never be the bright, mischievous Milly I remembered? She couldn't have reached the age. But so it was! The Milly of former days, Poke's plague and pride, who used to be the merriest

(even on unfortunate occasions), had passed away, and this pale, sorrowful-looking widow, old before her time, was all that was left! And yet when I looked more at her, either playing with her children, or reading an amusing book, her countenance would brighten, and I saw a glimpse of Milly's old look.

Her history was short: She married Henry, and was very happy, even as the wife of a poor clergyman, with only £300 a year. They had the two little children I saw. But a dark day came. Henry caught fever in visiting the sick poor of his parish. Then came his death. He, indeed, fulfilled the saying of the fire; and after doing his work here as a good and faithful servant, entered into his rest. Milly's work seemed not yet done. She often wished it were! But time soothes all things, and now she came back to her old home with her children; and, with the help of Miss Trimitt, she meant to educate them herself. It was good for her to have some regular employment of a pleasant kind; and, as they were nice, amiable children, they gave very little trouble to any one.

Next morning I watched Nelly's successor

clean the drawing-room; and when I saw how quickly and thoroughly she did her work, I found myself regarding her with a peculiar and lively interest. Had I ever seen her anywhere? My memory could only answer No, but still I went on worrying myself about her.

Did you ever, my dear young friend, feel yourself in the provoking predicament of half-recognizing a person as having been seen by you somewhere, though, if your very life depended on it, you couldn't tell where? If you ever have felt so, you will sympathize with me in my perplexity; if you have not, you will think, "Dear me, how very stupid of Mrs. Pin to be so very much enlightened by Miss Trimitt simply saying to one of the children, 'My dear, run and tell Betsy to bring some coals;'" and when the young housemaid entered, looking so neat and clean, how was it that her plump, trig figure, and rosy smiling face, immediately recalled to my thoughts the little, ragged, ill-used outcast, *Bat*, the tinker's child? How was it, I say? Why, to be sure, just because she and no other was the person I had been so cudgelling my brain to

remember! Of course, how could I have been so stupid? And Betsy was the name she was called in the Reformatory School at Biggin. Besides, there was the mark on her forehead, the remains of Mike's savage blow that awful night in the wood. Even the way she did her work was characteristic of my old friend; just in that quick, active way, she used to tramp along, gather sticks, and do Granny's will;—the difference now being that her energies and genius had been turned in the right direction, and she had been sent from school a capital servant; sharp, clever, *honest* in word and deed, obliging, and good-tempered. Betsy was a general favourite both with her ladies and fellow-servants, but most of all with the children. She really was very useful as an assistant to Poke in the care of their clothes, and always helped them to dress and undress.

Their mother was a little uncertain as to Betsy being quite trustworthy at first; but she had brought such an excellent character from school, and Lady Dripley, and even Miss Trimitt, had been so well satisfied with her ever since she came to the house (a year or

more before the little girls lived there), that she could have no more fears of that kind; besides, when she was not present, Poke was a most vigilant guardian. And so it came to be that Betsy was looked upon as almost as much one of the family as Poke herself, who, by the way, had grown very rheumatic, and rather crosser than formerly to everybody but the children; in fact, their mother complained that they had quite supplanted her in Poke's affections.

I am not sure if Poke had ever quite forgiven poor Mr. Henry for "dying, after having married her young lady, leaving her with them two dear *innercents;* but gentlemen is mostly fractious, and we couldn't have all lived together; and Miss Milly does look most uncommon sweet in mourning;"—which was a great consolation to Poke, as her eyes, at all events, were not offended; and I always thought, that never having been tempted into matrimony herself had given her a low opinion of the male sex in general.

Her great enemy, Joe, was still resident at Lady Dripley's; but Joe had long ago mended his manners, and when Poke reminded him

of his old tricks, looked scandalized, and thought she must have dreamt it. He was now a grown-up young man, with a countenance as stolid and habits as regular as the old clock in the hall.

Cook had left, and a new one ruled the roast in her stead. She, having saved a bit of money, had gone to live with a brother of hers, who kept a green-grocer's shop in the town—an occupation, I should conceive, in strict accordance with her tastes, as affording opportunity for the display of judgment, and the recreation of not a little harmless gossip.

Now, I think, I have told pretty fairly how I found matters concerning our friends on my return from travels.

One chapter will now finish all I have to say.

CHAPTER XVI.

OLD AGE AND LAST WORDS OF MRS. PIN.

I HAVE not told you (what I daresay you have found out) that I did not remain all the time I have been speaking of the household, in the china cup where I was placed by Miss Trimitt; but as it would have been tedious to relate all the details of going from one person to another, I felt you would understand that without description.

Our days were spent in the same quiet routine as ever. The bell was rung for prayers at nine, lunch at one (the children dined then), dinner at half-past five, tea at eight, and prayers at nine, an hour earlier than formerly, for the benefit of the children, and all were in bed and asleep by eleven; so that, by the time I had been there a week or two, and become accustomed to the changes, I felt as if

it were a dream that I had ever been away; in fact, I felt sometimes inclined to doubt my own identity.

One day my treacherous memory received a reminder, when Betsy opened the drawing-room door, and, with more than usual excitement in her voice, announced, "Mr. Hepburn." Lady Dripley seemed heartily glad to see him, and from the conversation I concluded they were old friends. "Dear me," I thought, "how very singular that Betsy's best friends should know each other!" Not at all so very wonderful, as it turned out, for Mr. Hepburn presently said,—

"And pray tell me, how is the child I sent to you from Biggin School turning out? I trust tolerably."

"Remarkably well," replied Lady Dripley, turning to Miss Trimitt. "My sister knows even more of her than I do. She is a much better judge of girls than I am; but I should say Betsy promises very well."

"Very well indeed," echoed Miss Trimitt; "if she only keep her promise," she added cautiously.

"Ah, indeed, I am glad to hear it; the

matron gave her an excellent character. Not that I ever expected it, though," Mr. Hepburn went on; "never saw anything so hopeless as she looked the first day I made her acquaintance. She positively wasn't half so clean and cared for as my dog; and I should have said that she was much the greater heathen of the two," he added, looking round, as if he expected somebody to contradict him. If he hoped for an argument he was disappointed, for the ladies only shook their heads and looked melancholy. So he went on—"Not that she was such a heathen either, for she returned me my purse, when I didn't know I had lost it. By-the-by," looking suddenly at the children, "these are poor Henry's children, aren't they?"

Their aunt said yes, and bade them come and speak to Mr. Hepburn. That gentleman patted their heads, and (not knowing what else to say to them) asked them his first question to Bat—"What their names were?"

The answer was, "Milly and Ellen."

Then Mr. Hepburn wanted to know "if they had ever heard the story of Bat?" (He never had got over that name.)

They said "No;" and Miss Trimitt explained that Betsy had been warned by her not to talk to them of her tinker life, as not being knowledge desirable for them.

Mr. Hepburn said "Humph," and began to tell, in a most interesting way, the story of Bat's fright in the back road, her gratitude to him, her honesty in returning the purse, and (as far as any one knew the circumstances of it) her attempted murder in the wood, only because, poor child, her new and better feelings and principles were inconvenient to the gang to whom she belonged. The little girls waxed sympathetic, and nearly cried, till they brightened up at hearing of the good dog who found her, and the gamekeeper's kindness, and the nice school at Biggin. They quite laughed and jumped with delight when informed that the heroine of this romance was their own maid Betsy.

Milly, who was a lively child, exclaimed, "How nice!" while her more reserved sister contented herself with smiling her pleasure. They asked in a breath the next minute, "What became of the good dog?"

"Oh, Nep's all right! He's not able for

much work now; but he walks about like a discreet old grandfather, as he is. He was thirteen last birthday. His birthday's in June. Shall I tell him the young ladies wish him 'many happy returns?' I wanted to give him a new brass collar in honour of his exploit; but, as Robin Howe said, 'Twould be a pity to disconvenience the poor beast, because he was wiser than many a body!'"

The children agreed, when comparing notes afterwards, "what a nice man Mr. Hepburn was," and wondered what "Humph" meant, almost wishing they had asked him; but it was just as well they did not, as he mightn't have liked the question, and I don't believe he could have told them.

A day or two after this, Lady Dripley was so unfortunate as to drop a stitch in her knitting, while all the rest were out. Such a catastrophe (she always declared) made her more nervous than anything else of a small kind. Betsy happened to come into the room with a parcel, and to her Lady Dripley turned for assistance,—"Have you such a thing as a pin? A big one, please, Betsy, if you have it,"—in a tone of agony.

"Yes, my lady, here is one," pulling me out of her apron.

Ah, Betsy, you little thought that at that moment you parted from your oldest friend, who knew you long before Mr. Hepburn did!

But Betsy was unconscious, and I was given to Lady Dripley to pick up her dropped stitch. When that operation was successfully accomplished, her ladyship felt as if she required change of occupation, so she bethought herself of a quantity of old lace in her wardrobe, which she had often wished to inquire into the merits of, and right up. So she went and did it, and put me by with the old lace to keep it all in order.

Now, young ladies, don't smile and look wise, for if you have only just discovered who Lady Dripley was, and what parts the present company performed in the drama of my life, all I can say is, your perceptions are not of the most acute;—in plain language, you are very stupid! Perhaps I should beg pardon for speaking so much of personal matters, and also for taking the liberty of changing all the names; but I could not have told my story so *comfort*ably if I had called your grandmamma

and the other people by their own names: of course *you* know what these are. And I now beg leave to thank you all very gratefully for listening so patiently to the wanderings of a poor old pin. My last will and testament is, that I be used to fasten the manuscript which I see your mamma has just completed.

And having said my say, I never mean to speak again.

CHAPTER XVII.

AND FINAL.

NOW, my dear little reader, who having read this History of a Pin, and, I trust, not having expected at first much of the wonderful, I would fain hope you have not been disappointed.

And I can assure you, that although it is certainly not a common occurrence for the pin family to be so communicative as the member of it whose history is now ended, still, what induced me to make her history public, was the knowledge that all the scenes through which she passed, and the persons with whose daily life she was familiar, are not fanciful pictures, but the best and the worst of them are the sober realities daily taking place around us.

Miss Trimitt, Nelly, Auntie, Willie, Mr.

Hepburn, Miss Fitznobbe, Bat and her companions, are all real people; and if you will take the trouble to look for them, you will find many such in your walk through the world. The changes made in ten years are also all of them true—with this difference, that if I had been telling you my own experience instead of the pin's, I should have been obliged to relate many far more startling and painful than those which came under her observation.

I daresay you will like to hear the latest accounts of St. Swithin's Court. My grandmother, the Lady Dripley of the story, is an old, old lady, but is always pointed out as a very wonderful woman for her age.

My mother, her aunt, and Poke, have all one by one dropped away; and my sister Ellen and myself, now no longer very young, live with grandmamma.

Betsy has risen to the dignity of ladies'-maid, and is as correct in her appearance and manners as Poke used to be; but I must do her the justice to say, that the young housemaids who have come to us from Biggin School since her elevation, escape with much less

scolding at her hands than Nelly and herself used to submit to under the regime of Poke; nor do I perceive that the work is worse done than formerly.

Joe is still with us, and I really can scarcely believe the stories told of him by Mrs. Pin, when I look at the middle-aged gardener trimming the flower-beds outside the window where I am writing.

I have nearly completed the task I proposed to myself, namely, to write the first chapter of this book, explaining how the pin came to tell its history; and after copying the manuscript written at the time by my mother, to write as a final chapter my reason for wishing the story to be published,—viz., the hope that it may afford some amusement, and also (may it not be?) some little profit to you, my reader.

If this should even not be the case, it is pleasant for me to hope it may, and so I shall go on hoping.

One word I should like to say to you, with the view of helping you to the lesson I myself have learnt from it: Following the changes *and* chances of any life, however humble, may

teach us that every event, no matter how exciting in its joy or sorrow it may have been, when it becomes a thing of "long ago," fades like the evening sunset, leaving only the shadows of the past for us to look back on, however bright and sunny our present and future life may be.

This may seem a strange truth to you, my reader, who are not yet old enough to have experience of it; but when you, now bright and buoyant with youth and health, come to be an old, weary traveller, nearly at the close of life's journey towards Eternity, you will find it true for all that: and if you would then, when nearly done with earthly future, have happy, peaceful shadows of the past, as well as a glorious hope before you, depend upon it the best way to secure that is to follow the counsel of the wise man,—to "Remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not." Strive in His strength, not your own, to remember him in all your plans, words, and actions—to remember him, who he is, and what he requires of you. Of such as "thought upon his name," he says, in the hearing of the whole world,

"They shall be mine, in the day when I make up my jewels."

And His promise standeth sure, "as long as the sun and the moon endure;" ay, and after this earth and these heavens shall be no more, the promise of God will abide for ever, and will find its more emphatic fulfilment in those "new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

And now, my patient young reader, adieu! My sermon has been longer than I intended. If so be that you weary of it, you can but "skip" it; but this was my reason for telling you—



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